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AND THE GREAT WINNERS



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No. 10



A SALUTE TO THE BRAVE
Sudha Sanjeev

HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO
Dipavali

TAWANG
Tashi Tsom



A LETTER TO YOU

READY STEADY RASHMI
Padmaja Menon

A WONDERLAND OF TOYS
O P Bhagat

**TWO MEN: A COMPARISON
DAMN THE WORLD**
Amandeep Bharati

A NIGHT OUT IN THE RAIN
Ravi Sharma



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EXCITING NEW YEAR CALENDAR

BER-THE TREE THAT BATTLES NATURE

Preeti Ramesh



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Thangamani

NOT A SECRET ANY MORE!

Bhavana Nair

BROWSE A BIT

Compiled by Thangamani

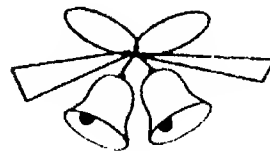


SMUGGLING AT JUHU

Gopi Gauba/Beejee

THE UMBRELLA THAT WOULDN'T GET LOST

Santhini Govindan



*Children's World Wishes its Readers
A Very Happy New Year*

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... Dear Readers

As we go into another New Year, I sit in my classroom and wonder what it is that possesses an adult like me to enrol for a course, that entails 'studying' and taking an exam too. It seems like only a few New Years ago that I was happily yelling with the rest of my class-mates in the final year of school and then in college.

"No more uniforms, no more school

No more studying and following rules "

And yet this roomful of adults, hanging on to every word uttered by our professor with the same rapt attention of earnest school students, proves that *a lot of adults have a lot to learn* or at least *a lot of adults still wish to learn a lot*. But as lecture by lecture our course unfolds, it becomes more and more apparent why such a motley crowd of Indians and foreigners get drawn to this field of study in India's art and culture at the National Museum Institute, New Delhi.

The head of the department has some fascinating and astounding facts for us — that amongst us there

are not just students and professors of art and literature, and journalists like myself, but doctors and engineers and also a rickshaw puller! One of our class-mates travels all night from Kota, Rajasthan, to get here for the weekly lecture and travels all night again to get back to Kota the next morning.

Indeed, almost on the threshold of the 21st century as we are, it is heartening that the desire to know the engima that is India— with her art, culture and heritage—can still draw, irresistibly, such a varied crowd of people from literally all walks of life. Deep down, however, one realises that it is not just a subject of study for each one of us. Gaining this knowledge is important to us because it stems from a deep desire to be able to recognise and understand all that we think, we know as Indian, or of India and her culture. To some extent, one suspects, this consciousness, to know India, also springs from the fact that in the jean-clad global slum that the world is becoming, each

individual still seeks her or his identity in the past of her/his country...

Whatever the reasoning, there is absolutely no denying the fact that it makes you feel a proud and privileged Indian, to be sitting there, listening to the wonders of India unravelled before you. An India that adopted, absorbed, assimilated freely from its foreign influences only to return to the world a philosophy, an art, a literature, a culture, a civilization that is still wholly and unmistakably Indian to the core. And this, indeed, is a lovely feeling to have as another January rolls by, bringing with it a trail of fly-past tri-colour as part of the Republic Day Parade. On January 26, as the soldiers, schoolchildren, folk dancers, floats, bravery award winners atop elephants, and retired servicemen march past the saluting base, an insurmountable sense of pride grips you, remember... this is India and it is they, them, us and we who have made it so for centuries and must keep it so for centuries to come...

Happy New Year, and
God Bless.

Editor



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A SALUTE TO THE BRAVE!

Text: Sudha Sanjeev Photographs courtesy: Indian Council for Child Welfare

WHAT makes a child living a routine life in the most ordinary of circumstances rise above the mundane and common-place to truly heroic heights? What motivates him to place the safety of others above all things else and display a presence of mind, physical daring and sheer guts regardless of the danger to himself?

Every year the nation recognises and salutes some of these children who transcend limitations of age and environment to save life and property.

The National Awards for bravery, gallantry and meritorious services were instituted by the Indian Council for Child Welfare in 1957. A total of 485 children—368 boys and 117 girls have, so far, been given the awards.

For 1994, twenty children—13 boys and 7 girls have been selected for the Awards.

Master **Prahlad Singh** from Uttar Pradesh has been awarded the coveted **BHARATAWARD**.



Prahlad fought valiantly with a ferocious bear to save five fellow students. The brave boy lost one eye, one hand and his face was permanently damaged in the scuffle. Prahlad Singh will receive a gold medal, a certificate and a cash award of Rs. 5,000.

The prestigious **GEETA CHOPRA AWARD** has



been bagged by Kumari **Anita Rawat** of Uttar Pradesh. Anita bravely resisted the attempts of some hooligans who were

trying to take advantage of her. Later she helped identify the criminals.

Master **Sudhir Sardana** of Haryana has



been selected for the **SANJAY CHOPRA AWARD**. Sudhir saved his family members from two armed criminals who forcibly entered their house. Though his father died in the incident, the other members were saved as Sudhir caught hold of one of them and raised an alarm. The courageous boy did not let go of the intruder until the neighbours came to the family's help. The criminal was then handed over to the police.

The Geeta and Sanjay Chopra Awards carry a silver medal, a certificate and Rs. 2500 each.

The three recipients of

the BAPU GAYADHANI AWARD, Master **Virender Singh Challing** of Himachal Pradesh, Master **Tenging Marak** of Meghalaya and Kumari **Urmila Thakur** of Madhya Pradesh, showed remarkable presence of mind and exemplary courage in difficult situations.

Virender Singh saved several of his village folk from a devastating fire that engulfed the entire village.

Tenging Marak saved his uncle from a leopard by killing the beast when it attacked Shri Marak.

Urmila Thakur, despite being mentally retarded, saved a two-year-old child from being crushed under a truck.

The Bapu Gayadhani Award winners will receive a silver medal, a certificate and a cash award of Rs. 1500 each.

The other recipients of the NATIONAL AWARDS are Kumari **Geethanjali Sukhija** (Goa), Master **Veenish R.** (Kerala), Master **Karthikeyan Kathamuthu** (Pondicherry), Master **Avinash Pandey** (Madhya Pradesh), Kumari **Lalita Gonda** (Madhya Pradesh), Master **A.H. Mohd.**



Ajit Kumar Parija



Deepak Rai



Lalita Gonda



Karthikeyan Kathamuthu



Gitanjali Sukhija



Thanghao Lhouvum

Mohseen-or-Rehamana (Karnataka), Master **Karunakar Murthy K.C.** (Karnataka), Master **Ajit Kumar Parija** (Orissa), Kumari **Mamata Sahoo** (Orissa), Kumari **Nisha Verma** (Bihar), Master **Deepak Rai** (Delhi), Kumari **Ruchi Paliwal** (Uttar Pradesh),

Master **Surendra Pandurang Khatale** (Maharashtra) and Master **Thanghao Lhouvum** (Nagaland).

Mohseen-or-Rehmana and Mamata Sahoo both fought criminals in two different incidents. Nisha Verma was instrumental in getting timely assistance and thus saving her



Nishi Verma



Ruchi Paliwal



Mamata Sahoo



Karunakar Murthy K.C.



Veenish R.



Avinash Pandey

mother as well as their possessions from two thieves. Surendra Khatale's presence of mind averted a major rail accident.

Deepak Rai's timely actions prevented the thatched roof of his school collapsing and thus saved the lives of 150 students

and teachers of his school. Lalita Gonda saved her six-month-old sister when the wall of their hut collapsed in a heavy downpour.

Seven of the other children were involved in trying to save the lives of others in drowning incidents. All these children

will receive a silver medal, a certificate and a cash award of Rs. 1000 each.

This year's youngest awardees are Nishi Verma and Thanghao Lhouvum—both of who were 6 years and 11 months when they performed the deed.

The high-powered selection committee comprised of representatives of the Ministries of Welfare, Defence, Home Affairs, Human Resource Development (Department of Women and Child Development), Directorate of Education, Doordarshan, All India Radio, ICCW office-bearers and members.

The awardees are granted financial assistance until they complete their schooling under the Sponsorship Programme of the Council. In addition ICCW provides financial assistance under its Indira Gandhi Scholarship Scheme to those undertaking professional courses such as engineering and medicine. For the others, this assistance is provided till they complete their graduation. The Government of India has reserved seats for these awardees in medical and engineering colleges and polytechnics.



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Hundreds of years ago

Deepavali

A.D. Landmark Events

96 Persecution of Christians by Domitian

396 Last Olympic Games of the classical times held.

1096 The First Crusade begins (to aid Greeks against Seljuk Turks in the Asia Minor), to go on upto 1099

1696 Accession of Peter I (Peter the Great) as sole Tsar of Russia.

1796 Edward Jenner discovers smallpox vaccine; Alyos Senefelder invents lithography.

1896 The first modern Olympic Games (founded by the Frenchman Baron de Coubertin) held, only the Summer Games, in Athens; Henri Becquerel discovers radio-activity; Nobel Prizes are established; a great famine begins in India to go on for a whole year—spreading to almost every province and affecting about 34 million people; Ezhavas, victims of exploitation by caste Hindus in Kerala, submit a Memorandum to the Maharaja of Travancore after a statewide campaign; Don Passos, John (Roderigo), author of *Manhattan Transfer* and *USA*, born; Italians defeated by Thiopians at the Battle of Adowa; Jameson Raid in South Africa.

Fill this portion with what you feel are the most significant events of 1996 to have a ready reckoner of your own—in January 1997 compare it with the items that your friends have put down:

1996

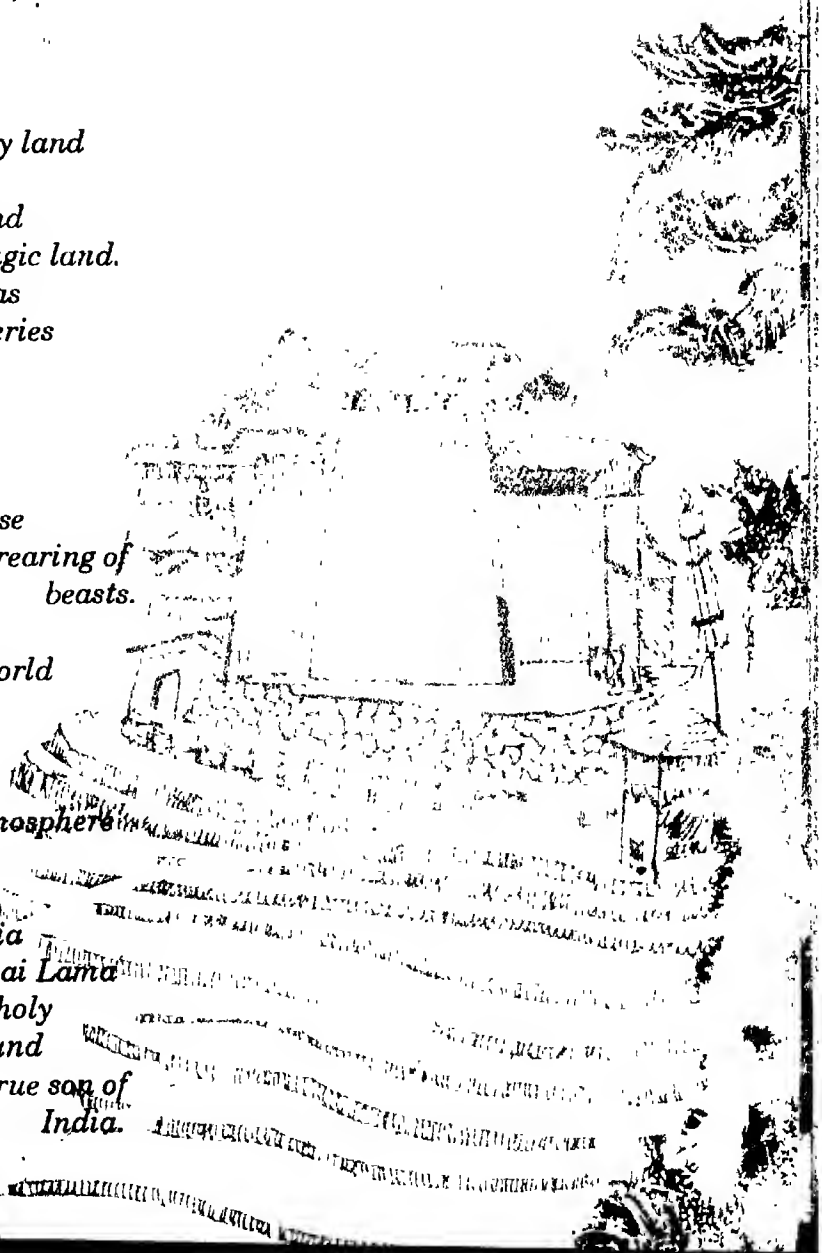
TAWANG

Tashi Tsom

Illustrations: Seema Pandey

Tarry a little and behold
A land so pretty, yet bold
Girdled by snowy white
Dangling beads of light.
Where on this Earth is this pretty land
Our prized land of Tawang?
Like a magician waving his wand
Tawang rises from this great magic land.
This is the native place of Monpas
And a beautiful place of monasteries
A place distinguished for its
Great culture and daring feats.
A place known for its terrace
cultivation
And aromatic, soft, smooth, cheese
For its excellent carpets and the rearing of
beasts.

Tawang is the eternal paradise
Like something from the outer world
With yaks, cows and sheep
Breeding in this pretty world.
The dawn is so interesting
The smoke rising to scent the atmosphere
As we pass through the village
The mind feels the utmost joy.
Praised be this great land of India
The land of Buddha and the Dalai Lama
Having set your footsteps on the holy
ground
Feel the immense joy of being a true son of
India.





Illustrations: Subir Roy

Dear pets and debts,

"You have to do this for me, Perky," said Raghu fiercely. "You *have* to. After all, you are in my debt."

"Debt?" I asked. "What do you mean 'debt'? I've never in my life taken any money from you or..."

"Oh! I mean it metaphorically, don't you realise?" he said with great scorn in his voice and manner. "You do know what the word means, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, of course I do," I mumbled. "I know it very well. Metaphorically. It has to do with..."

He cut me short. "Yes, that's it," he said. "So since you are in my debt, metaphorically, you will have to do this for me."

'This' was a little pup whose neck had a string round it and the end of which, the string I mean, Raghu was pushing fiercely into my hand.

"You know my mother doesn't like dogs," Raghu went on. "But this one she will like very much, I'm sure. Only thing is, she will have to be given time to start liking it. May be a day or so..."

"Or a century, or two centuries," I said. I could be scornful too if I wanted.

He didn't even bother to hear what I said. "So, here it is. His name is Pupsqueak. He drinks milk and eats rice. But don't give him spicy stuff. And oh, he dislikes girls. Small girls, big girls, any type of girl..."

"Then how on earth will your mother...?" I started to say but Raghu had already gone, leaving me with a piece of string, at the end of which, the string I mean, was a dog. A pup. A pup called Pupsqueak.

When you think of it, what a stupid name. Pupsqueak. Techah!

Pupsqueak looked at me mournfully. He was a clean little pup and I wondered where Raghu had got him from. Meanwhile, how was I to manage him with Lini our cat who hated strangers, especially if they had four legs and a bark, and my mother who had made custard with all the left-over milk in the house? Just as I was wondering what I should do, along came Gnat. Gnat with the silent G.

You know who Gnat is, don't you? He is the boy with the nose. His nose is

really very big and always seems to lead a life of its own. Gnat likes me, but his nose doesn't.

Anyway, this time, when Gnat smiled, his nose seemed to smile too. That was unusual.

"Hi, Perky," said Gnat. "What are you doing with that cute puppy?" The nose sniffed.

"You like him?" I asked. "His name's Pupsqueak."

"Oh, what a nice name," Gnat said. "It's a really nice name. Can I hold his string for a minute?" The nose looked the other way.

"Of course, you can," I told Gnat. And then a brilliant idea struck me. An idea that would get rid of all my problems—Raghu, Pupsqueak. Lini versus Pupsqueak, Raghu versus me, my mother versus me...of all of that.

"Hey, Gnat," I said heartily as if I was doing him a great favour. "You know you are in my debt, don't you?"

"Debt!" He was quite alarmed. "What are you talking about, Perky? You know my mother never gives me pocket money so..."

"I mean it metaphorically," I said. "You are in my debt metaphorically."

"Oh," he said as if a 100 watt bulb had been put on inside his head. "Oh, I see

what you mean, metaphorically. Of course, metaphorically."

"So, since you are in my debt, metaphorically, that is, can you do me a favour?" I asked.

"Yes, yes, I can," Gnat said while his nose looked at the ground.

"Can you take Pupsqueak for a walk?"

"A walk?"

"Yes. A walk. For a few days. I mean for a few hours."

"A few hours!" he exclaimed. "But I have to do my homework!"

"So have I," I said. "But remember, you are in my debt."

He sighed. "Metaphorically," he reminded me with another sigh. "All right, I'll take him for a walk."

The nose rose up high like an angry Emperor.

About ten minutes later, there was an uproar at the gate. It consisted of the voices of my brother, Raghu's mother, my brother, my mother, my brother, Raghu, my brother, and a pup. The pup was the most silent.

My brother was shrieking, Raghu's mother was screaming and trying to get away from the string at one end of which was my brother and at the



other end the pup, my mother was asking everybody what the matter was and Raghu was trying to shout at everybody to please be quiet and calm down. The pup merely whimpered.

Finally when the voices had dried up, as they do after fifteen minutes of continuous exercise, I heard Raghu's mother asking him where the pup had come from.

It was my brother who answered. "Gnat gave it to me," he said. "He told me I was in something something to him, some meta something so I should take the pup."

"But it is Perky who is in debt to me," said Raghu, fiercely as usual.

"What!" exclaimed my mother. "Has Perky borrowed..."

"No. I meant it metaphorically," said Raghu. "I asked Perky to look after the pup because metaphorically, he is in debt to me."

"Gnat used the same words," I heard my brother say. "Some debt...some meta... What does it mean?"

"What I want to know is what is to be done with the pup?" asked Raghu's mother. "Poor thing. It looks so thin and scared

and I can't stand it."

Raghu's face, I could see, lit up. "Can't we take care of it?" he asked his mother. "His name is Pupsqueak. Please, can I keep it as my pet?"

"No!" screamed Raghu's mother. "Not at all. You know I'm allergic to dogs."

"But..." began Raghu.

"No buts or anything," Raghu's mother said, still in a high voice. "Remember you are in my debt. Metaphorically."

It was probably that nasty word that did it. Or the fact that my brother's hold on the string at the end of which was the puppy or had been the puppy, had slackened. Whatever it was, the subject of the discussion, the little Pupsqueak, suddenly gave a little bark, jumped up and scampered away on its little legs. Scampered away just as if it knew where home was, before anyone even knew it had gone.

So now I'm no longer in Raghu's debt, metaphorically or in any other way.

By the way, what *does* the word mean?

*Yours metapuzzled,
Perky*

READY STEADY RASHMI



Story:
Padmaja Menon

Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chaudhury

MRS. CHANDRAN sighed. As usual her daughter, Rashmi, was being lazy. Really, sometimes she thought Rashmi was the laziest child in the world. She would shy away from everyday chores, like making her bed, arranging her books, picking up after games. Mrs. Chandran was tired of asking her to do this and that. She felt something of a nag. And she did not want to be one.

But watching her at the pool made Mrs. Chandran want to shake Rashmi hard. She was supposed to kick out from the wall side and swim to the other end, hands out in front of her, slightly bent, fingers pointing. She knew how to do it but was lazy. She would just bob up and down and chatter away with her friends. When the coach noticed them, there would be a flurry of activity; when he looked away—back to dawdling. Mrs. Chandran could ill afford this summer swimming camp but somehow she had managed. And to top it all Rashmi tired her with her lethargic attitude.

It wasn't that she couldn't do things—she just wouldn't. Yet for her dog Bingo, she would do

anything. When Bingo was just a pup, Rashmi would get up in the middle of the night to keep him company when he whined. She wouldn't pick up her lunch or dinner plate but she would clean and dry Bingo's! If Bingo was tied on the terrace, she would sprint up to free him. But if Mrs. Chandran asked her to bring in the clothes from the terrace, she wouldn't budge!

Mrs. Chandran sighed again. What could be done? The other girls were swimming up and down. Most of them had mastered the technique well. Fifteen days of precious coaching was over. Rashmi had learnt the basics—in fact she had picked up quite fast but she wouldn't practise. Mrs. Chandran wanted her daughter to be a champion swimmer! So she nagged her to buck up. But Rashmi, she wouldn't bother!

The smart young coach was speaking to Rashmi. 'I bet he is scolding her for lack of performance,' thought Mrs. Chandran grimly. She had such dreams for her children. 'Would they ever be fulfilled?' she wondered.

She looked around the pool. It was a placid blue,

fully tiled. The first batch crowded it. Most of them were around five to eight—all resplendent in gay coloured swimsuits. Some cried loudly, some sniffled, some screamed. Parents hovered nearby decorating their kids with all the latest swimming aids. One particular child bawled regularly. The coach would try all tactics with her and ultimately he would throw her into the water. She would come up for air. Most girls quietened after that and usually that would be their first lesson too. But not this child! This one continued to scream till the coach ordered her out of the pool.

There were two other girls, teenagers who came daily, entered the water and stood at the edge of it, shivering. They wouldn't walk more than a few yards either. They were supposed to get the feel of water by walking with their head down, pick up a few pebbles if possible too. But they were too scared.

'Well, compared to that Rashmi is definitely better!' thought Mrs. Chandran. There was another girl around eight years old who was very fast. She was very impatient too. She would

keep on pestering the coach to take her to the deep end. But he would chide her and refuse. "Too soon, too soon," he would say. Mrs. Chandran wondered where that girl was today. She looked around. 'Aha! there she is in the middle of the pool almost at the deep end. So the coach has allowed her at last,' she thought. The girl did not look very confident there. Her head was constantly going under and she was splashing about very fast. She seemed to be....drowning? ...Drowning? 'Oh no, it can't be,' Mrs. Chandran screamed...

She couldn't move. As if in a dream she saw Rashmi strike out gracefully—her tall figure swallowed up the distance, her arms slightly bent divided the water in perfect motion, her fingers pointed in an arrow, she reached the child two seconds before the coach did...pulled her up by the hair (where did she learn that?) and handed her up to him!

What happened after that Mrs. Chandran could not see. For she sat down suddenly, her head spinning. From the mayhem at the pool she realised that the child was being

taken care of. First aid was being administered, the Doctor had arrived, an emergency ambulance arranged. But apart from all that she was stunned by Rashmi's timely action!

Her slow-coach—a heroine! A champion! A champion swimmer and a champion in real life! She watched as the whole pool crowded round Rashmi. The coach was shaking her hand vigorously—the others patted her on the back, and she looked up at Mrs. Chandran. In slow motion, Mrs. Chandran raised her hands and waved. Rashmi grinned from ear to ear.

Mrs. Chandran's eyes overflowed. 'My darling,' she thought and ran up to the pool's edge, spurred into sudden action. The rescued child's parents were now asking for Rashmi's parents...

On the way back home Rashmi chatted non-stop. "Mama, you know, I have been selected for the advanced swimming course... the coach said I swam like a champion... the others said..." Mrs. Chandran listened... what did it matter if her daughter was lazy... whenever necessary she could swing into action! Children who were lazy at

home to begin with would not necessarily be slow all their lives. Sometimes, it was better to let them be... And her daughter had proved she could be a responsible person, caring person, also a person who could be depended upon. All the other advanced swimmers had been too shocked to move. Rashmi alone had moved with alacrity! Mrs. Chandran burst out laughing. Reaction was just setting in...

Rashmi stared, "Hey Mom, what is so funny?" she asked nonplussed.

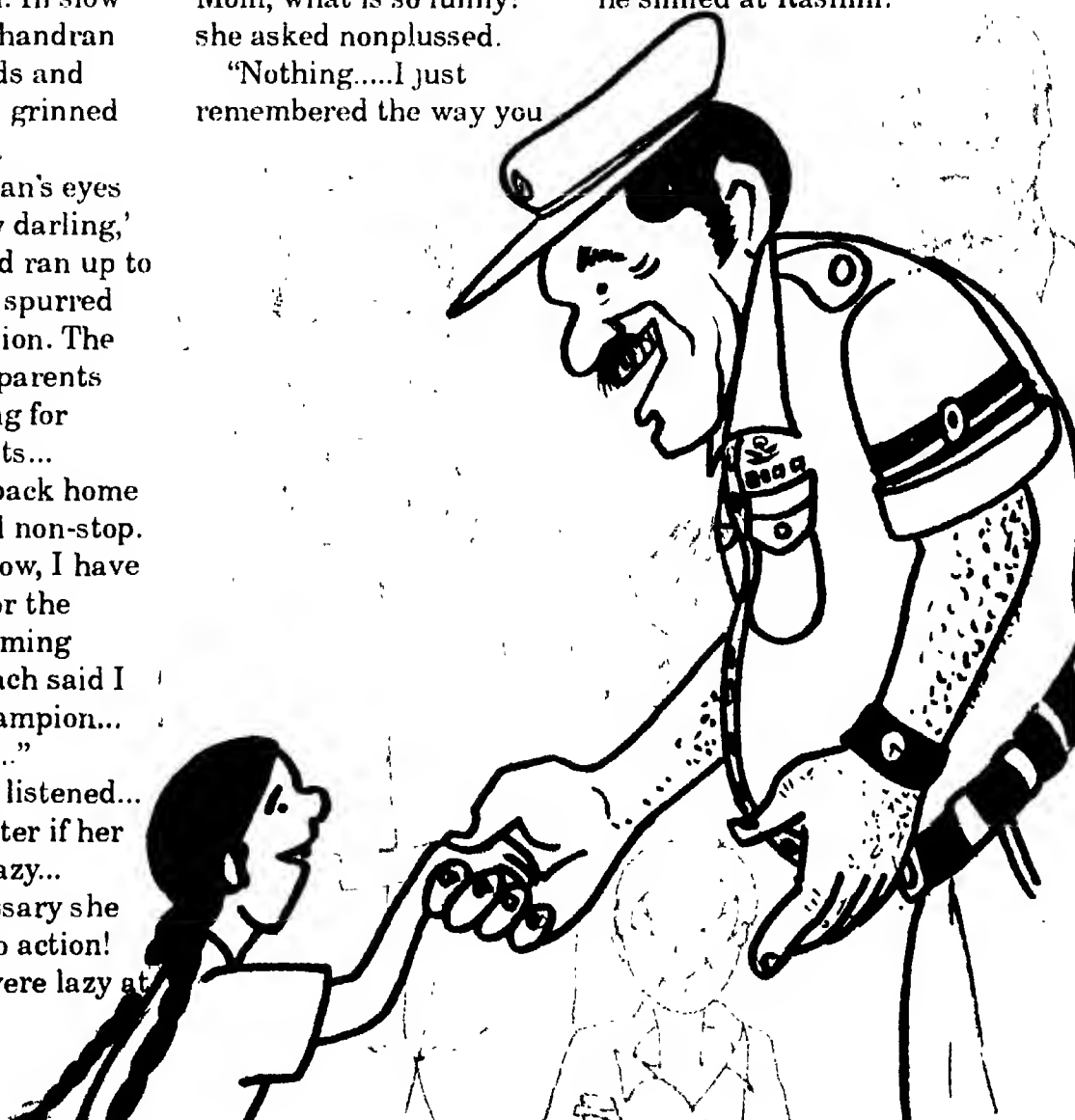
"Nothing.....I just remembered the way you

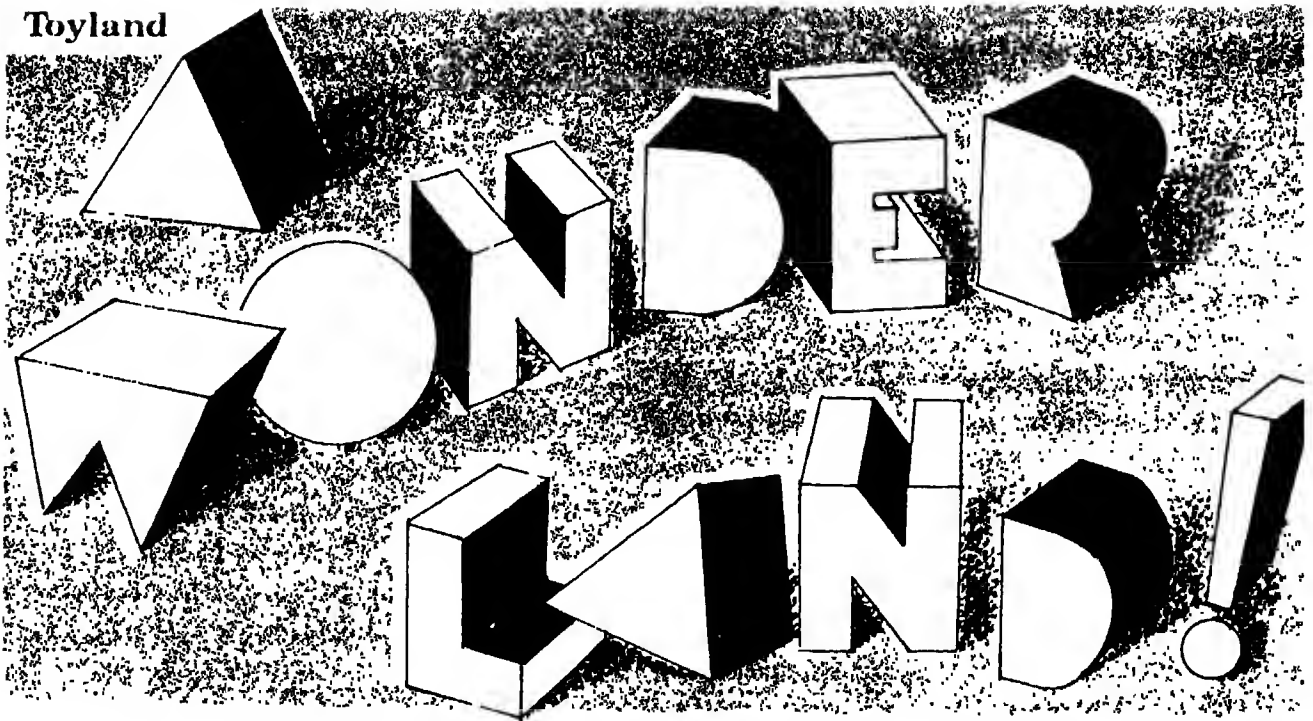
streaked past the others! Where did you get the energy?" she managed amidst explosions of laughter.

"Well, you know, Mom, all that stored up energy of mine came into use," grinned Rashmi cheekily.

When they reached home, a crowd of people greeted them. A policeman came forward. He was the child's father.

"There are a lot of people here who would like to shake your hand..." he smiled at Rashmi.





Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

A trip to Toyland? Then it is for small children, some boys and girls will say. For as they step into their teens, they think that they are too old for toys.

But all children play with toys, even in their late teens. Only the types of toys change. These may be tool kits or electronic sets or video games.

However, some older children still love their dolls and teddies. And some others start collecting these and other playthings as a hobby. Some even make them.

Some grown-ups too do that. A few may be cranky. A few others are at heart like boys and girls. But many others, for the love of it, make toys or collect them and write about them. One is never too old for toys.

Where is Toyland? It is not in any one part of the globe. It is everywhere—right in your town. In fact, it starts where you keep your toys. From there it spreads all over the world.

This trip is both in space and time. If we look at the toys around us, we can visualise what they were like 50 or 100 years ago. We will go even further into the past...500...1500...5000 years from now.

To travel to different places we walk or use a vehicle. But for journeying into the past, we shall get into a Time Machine or fly on the wings of our imagination.

A toy, as you know,
is an object chil-
dren play with.

But toys are not confined
to the human world alone.
Young animals play too
though they have no toys.
A kitten may play with a
ball of wool or a large,
fallen leaf; quite often it
plays with its mother's
tail and sometimes even
with its own tail.

A pup likes to run after
a ball. A dolphin, after
training, blithely balances
a ball on its beak. Birds,
like parrots, learn to play
or perform tricks.

Toys have always
existed. They are as old as
man himself. They were
there when men lived in
caves. But those toys were
unlike the toys we have
today or have had for
hundreds of years. The
dolls in those days were
just pieces of wood or
stone or bone. But that
mattered little to the
children who played with
them.

A child's imagination is
more vivid than an
adult's. Once he regards a
piece of wood or stone as a
toy, it remains a toy for
him. A doll to him is as
good as a living thing. He
even considers it his
friend or companion.
Naturally, he thinks that
it feels hungry or thirsty
or sleepy as he does.



A poor girl loves and
caresses her crude,
wooden doll, wrapped in a
piece of old cloth, just as a
rich girl treats her cute
Barbie or expensive teddy
bear.

Not long ago, a little
boy fell ill. A doctor was
called in. After examining
him, the physician told
the boy that he would
soon be all right, but he
must rest in bed.

As the doctor was about to leave, the boy asked him to bandage his clay elephant. He said that the tip of its trunk had broken. Because of the pain the elephant could not sleep.

There is no end to the variety of toys. Some toys are as popular today as they were when first made centuries ago like the ball, rattle, top, drum and trumpet. And, of course, the

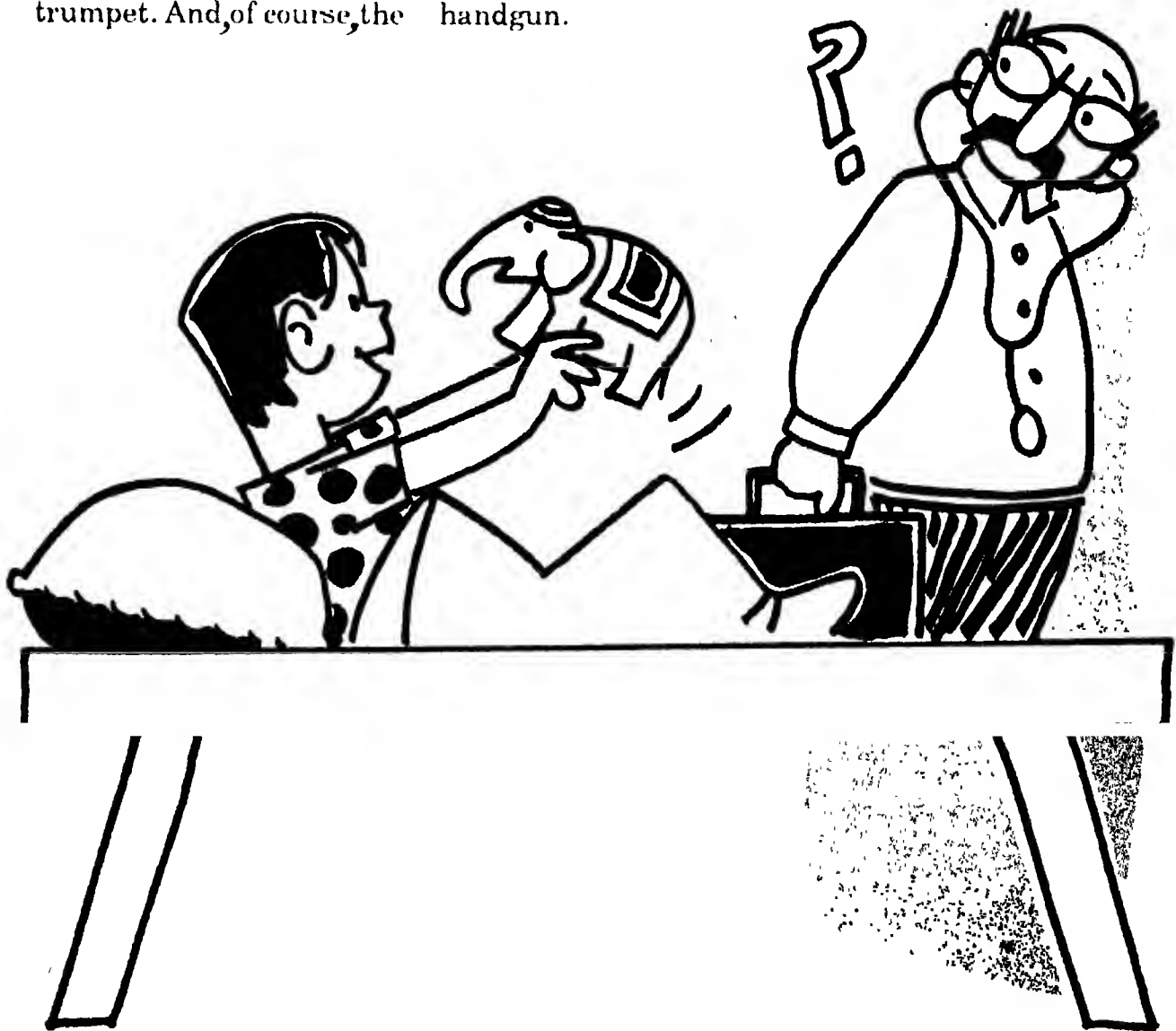
doll. There are so many varieties of dolls that it may not be easy to count them.

Most toys are models of real things. A doll is thus a toy baby or person. There are such models of animals and birds too.

Then there are models of cooking utensils, furniture and weapons. A water-pistol is modelled on the short-barrelled handgun.

The cart is one of the first vehicles man made. In olden days there were toy carts too. We still make them today. At the same time, we have toy imitations of modern vehicles like trucks, cars and aeroplanes.

Many are the materials of which toys are made. Clay, stone, wood and metals (tin in particular) come to the mind at once.



Yarn, cloth and rubber are also used.

There are wax and papier mache toys too as well as those of leather, glass and porcelain. Most folk toys are made of grass, frond, reed and bamboo, even of coconut shells and sea-shells. Ours is an age of plastics. So many of the toys are made of plastic.

Many children make mud dolls, animals and other playthings themselves.

Toys were once made by individuals and families. They still make them, but they cannot meet the growing demand. Most modern toys are now made in factories.

Toy-making is a big industry these days. Some countries produce lots of dolls and other toys and export them.

Toysellers are a common sight in every town. If one sells balloons, another offers tin whistles, reed pipes, small kaleidoscopes and plastic dolls.

But for a better and wider choice you have to go to a toy stall or shop. Some stores are so large and have so many different kinds of playthings that they seem to be treasure-houses of toys.

Some shops specialise in teddies and other soft toys or educational games. Or they have arrangements for video games.

Some cities the world over have toy museums. Delhi has Shankar's International Dolls Museum.

There are toy stories too. Enid Blyton has written many such tales, Noddy being the best known of her toy characters. That children's classic, *Pinochio*, by C. Collodi, is about the adventures of a lively, boy-like puppet of wood.

In the *Jatakas*, stories of the Buddha's previous births, there are references to the toys of a prince.

Kalidasa tells of the dolls and games of Parvati when she was a small girl.

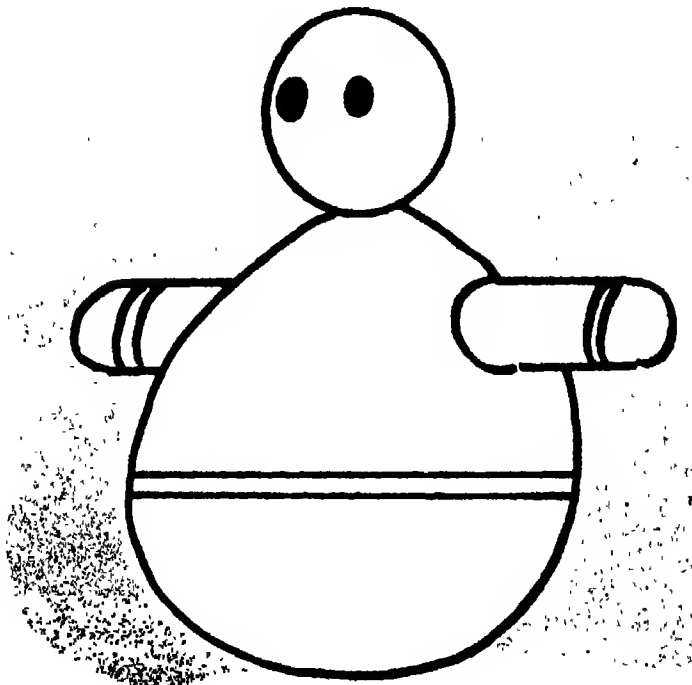
With her maids she built sand castles on the banks of the Mandakini river.

The Ocean of Story, or *Kathasaritsagara* a Sanskrit treasury of tales, also mentions dolls and other toys. One of the dolls can fly through the air.

Mruchhakatika is the title of a Sanskrit play which means Clay cart; in other words, a toy cart.

You will also find toys in paintings and other works of art. Every museum has samples of old, very old, toys.

Poems, stories and art pieces about toys are not just entertaining, but also tell us something about the people who made them and the children who played with them. Toys thus tell us a thrilling tale.



VISA OLYMPICS OF THE IMAGINATION'96

RULES & REGULATIONS

1. **How to enter: FREE APPLICATION FORMS/NO APPLICATION FEE.**
You must be between the ages of 11 and 13, as of August 1, 1995 (proof of age will be required for winner's eligibility).
Draw or paint a picture of your vision of a new Olympic sport. Pictures must be no larger than 17 inches x 17 inches (36 cms x 36 cms). Pictures must be accompanied by a one paragraph description in English or Hindi of how the new Olympic sport depicted in the entry could promote world peace and unity.
Entries must be accompanied by a completed official application form signed by you and your parent or legal guardian and sent to:
Visa Olympics of the Imagination - India
C/o Burson-Marsteller Roger Pereira Communications Pvt. Ltd.
47 Whitehall, 143 A.K. Marg, Kemp's Corner, Bombay 400 036, India
and received no later than January 20, 1996.
2. You may submit as many entries as you wish. All artworks must be created by one individual. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, late, incomplete, illegible, damaged, misdirected postage due to mail.
3. Entries will be judged by a panel of judges approved by Visa on the basis of artwork's originality and imagination as well as artistic merits. All entries must be accompanied by a written paragraph describing how the new sport depicted promotes world peace and unity.
4. This contest is being promoted in 5 major Indian cities. One grand prize will be awarded. This prize consists of a 4-night, 5-day trip for winner and her or his parent or legal guardian to the Olympic Summer Games in Atlanta, USA, including hotel (double occupancy), round-trip coach airfare from an international airport closest to winner's home, ground transport to scheduled events, meals and selected admissions to Olympic events. All other expenses, including taxes, are the winner's responsibility. Winner and parent or legal guardian must be able to travel July 15, 1996 to August 15, 1996 or forfeit prize. No prize substitutions or transfers. Retail value of trip depends on rates existing at the time. Not redeemable for cash.
5. Contest is open to Indian citizens residing in India, except for children of employees of VISA, its member financial institutions, participating partner sponsors and their respective parent and subsidiary companies and their agents and suppliers with respect to this contest. Void where prohibited.

6. By participating, entrants transfer all rights in and to the artwork, including the copyright to sponsor. Entries become the property of sponsor and will not be returned. Winner and parent or legal guardian must sign and return an affidavit of eligibility and publicity and liability release within 14 days of notification or forfeit prize. Winner and parent or legal guardian must have valid passports and be eligible for entry into the USA on the travel date.
7. In the event of a tie, duplicate prize will be awarded.
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with a written letter signed by yourself and your parent or legal guardian, which includes the following information:
Name, age as on August 1, 1995, address (building, street/marg, city, pin code, country) telephone number and the following:

By entering this contest, I hereby transfer and assign my artwork and the copyright therein to VISA, together with all other representations, warranties and rights as specified in the Official Rules. Artwork will not be returned.

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Last Name _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Telephone Number _____

Birthday (month/day/year) _____

Entrant Signature . _____

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature _____

Amandeep Bharti (14)

*He speaks half-truths and lies, by them
 he's adored*

*He always spoke the truth, yet he was
 always ignored*

*He is a self-obsessed fool; they talk of his
 great intelligence*

*He was selfless, eager to help, so they
 questioned his common sense*

*His name is not written on a single good
 deed; his goodness is praised*

*His life was expended for the sake of
 others; now doubts over his
 integrity are raised*

*A man like him, did he deserve to live?
And the other so different, did the world
 deserve him?*

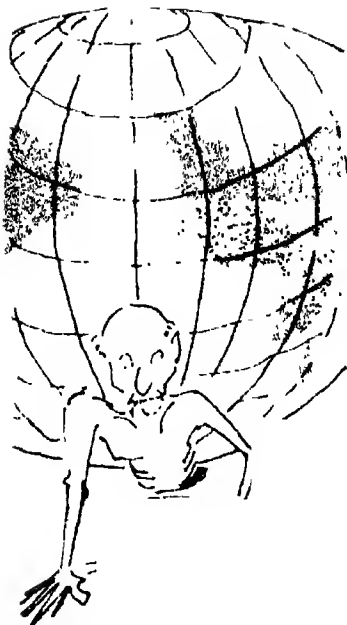
*He who is called great, still enjoys life in
 every way; yet*

*He who was truly great, has quietly passed
 away.*



DAMN THE WORLD

Amandeep Bharti (14)



Does the world have anything to give?
Ask the world: no, it will say;
Much will be taken, little received
Nothing but pain will be given away
Truth has been murdered, brutally
Honesty has become a symbol of stupidity
Endless deceit is now a reality
Will happiness ever reappear
Or will despair, destruction remain and
prosper
Reader beware, the future is black, a
nightmare;
Life has been squashed like a ripe grape;
and
Death is now the only escape.



SAIL STEEL

TRUSTED NAME

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CENTRAL MARKETING ORGANISATION
STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED
Building industry through trust

Story: Ravi Sharma
Illustrations: Nilabho
D. Chowdhury

IT WAS a dark and stormy night. Kartik and Kamakshi were travelling with their parents in their car. They had just attended their cousin Rushil's birthday party. It had started to rain, the reason why they had left so late... But when the rain showed no signs of letting up, their father had opted to drive in the rain.

Normally talkative and mischievous, both the children were quiet as they watched the lightning flash through the night sky. The patter of the raindrops falling on their car with all their might filled their little hearts with an unknown fear. All they wanted was to get home, to the cozy softness of their beds. They were not used to staying up so late. Usually in bed by nine, it was nearing twelve. And they had school the next day.

"It's very late for the children. They have to go to school tomorrow," their mother voiced her concern.

"I know," said their father as he stepped up the speed of their car.

Suddenly it happened.

A NIGHT OUT IN THE RAIN



There was a loud thud followed by an agonizing shriek.

Kamakshi ducked as she realized their car had collided with something.

"You hit a dog! My God!" said her shocked mother.

"It's not a dog. It's a small puppy!" Kartik corrected her. He was leaning out of the window, unable to take his eyes off the helpless creature as it writhed on the road, in pain.

"Kartik! Don't put your head out of the window!" Kamakshi pulled her younger brother to the safety of their car.

"These animals have no sense!" their father grumbled. "Look, how it just dashed towards the car from nowhere. I didn't even have a chance to slam the brakes."

He was right. The rain and the poor visibility had probably made his job even more difficult.

"Papa, stop the car! The puppy..." Kamakshi almost screamed.

"It will be all right. The puppy isn't hurt much..."

"But Papa, it is in a lot of pain," Kartik protested.

Their parents looked at each other.

"It's getting late, children. You have to go to

school tomorrow. And both of you have your exams..." their mother said uncertainly.

Their father kept driving.

Both Kartik and Kamakshi kept looking back. The puppy was now out of sight. All they saw was the merciless onslaught of the raindrops.

They looked at each other. Both of them made a rueful face. They were extremely unhappy and sorry for the dog.

Ten minutes later, they were tucked into their beds in their warm quilts after they had had milk. It felt nice and comfortable to be in the house, but for the memory of the injured dog they had left behind.

"Kamakshi, what will happen to that puppy?"

"Papa said it will be all right."

"Do you really think so?"

"No, I don't," Kamakshi said thoughtfully.

"It will be suffering, the poor creature. We shouldn't have left him like that."

"Come, let's go to Papa and ask him to get the dog."

"It's late and he won't agree..." Kamakshi stared at the ceiling of the room.

"But, Kamakshi, our

car hit the poor animal. So it is our duty to look after the puppy. Otherwise he might even die... All because of us. It is so cold... And he is injured too..."

"We didn't do the right thing."

"I can't sleep. I can't forget the puppy..."

When Kamakshi looked at his face, there were tears in his eyes. "We must do something for the puppy."

"Don't cry, Kartik. It will certainly not help the puppy, anyway. I have an idea. The place isn't far off. It's just near the end of our road. Why don't we go looking for it?"

"You are mad. In this rain? We will get wet!" Kartik wiped away his tears. "And I'm afraid of going out in the night..."

"You have your reason for not going out and Papa has his reasons for not going out!" Kamakshi said angrily. "But if we are going to help the dog, I'll need your help. I too am afraid of going out alone. But together we might find courage."

"Na, baba, na, I am afraid. Why don't we go and ask Papa?"

"You do that."

A couple of minutes later Kartik returned with

a glum expression.

"What did he say?"

"He told me to forget the puppy and try to sleep."

There was a silence in the room as both of them tried their best to sleep.

"Kamakshi, are you sleeping?"

"No."

"Are you still interested in going out?"

"Yes."

"Then come, let's go."

A few minutes later, armed with a torch and their raincoats, they opened the front door of their house as silently as they could and stepped out.

It was still raining heavily and they hesitated as they looked at each other anxiously.

Kartik nodded.

They stepped into rain.

Reaching the spot where the accident had taken place wasn't much of a problem. But it took them a long time to trace the puppy. The water had collected at several places and several times they were on the verge of turning back to the comfort and security of their home. They were wet too, despite their raincoats.

"I'm feeling cold," Kartik said as his teeth

chattered.

"Do you wish to go back?"

"No," he said firmly.

"I think he has gone. Papa was right. He wasn't hurt badly." Kamakshi looked at Kartik.

"No. He was hurt very badly..."

They heard the muted

whimpers of the puppy.

"Can you hear him?"

"Yes. But where is he?"

They looked around, more carefully this time.

Then they saw him. He was sprawled underneath a drain-pipe, trying to protect himself from the might of the rain. Both his hind legs were stretched



out behind his waist. On seeing them he started howling in agony.

"His legs are broken!" Kamakshi screamed with dismay. "What are we going to do?"

Kartik picked up the puppy and hid him under his raincoat.

They were thoroughly drenched by now and were shivering.

"Let's take him home," Kartik suggested. The dog's cries made him sad.

"I have a better idea. Let's take him to a doctor. There's one on this road."

"But he doesn't treat animals. He treats only children... For animals you have a separate doctor."

"Something is better than nothing. Maybe he'll give some medicine to the poor puppy."

"Ok, let's go."

The doctor's house wasn't far from their home. The house was plunged in darkness.

They knocked at the gate but the sound didn't go far. There was no response.

Kartik located the bell.

"Don't! You'll get a shock if you press the wet switch."

Kartik immediately pulled back his hand.

Then from his pocket he

pulled out the torch and pressed the button with it.

They heard the bell ring within the house.

Both of them smiled.

Five minutes later someone opened the door. It was the doctor.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he asked them sleepily.

"Doctor uncle, we have a sick dog. He needs help..."

"But I don't treat animals..."

"Please, uncle. This dog was run over by a car. He might not live if we don't do something for him now. We don't know the whereabouts of an animal doctor. Please try to do what you can..." Kartik pleaded. "Please, Doctor uncle, please..."

"Where are your parents?" He looked behind them.

"We haven't told them. They are at home..."

The doctor looked at them. They were both wet.

"Come in. But I'm afraid I can't do much..." He opened the gate for them.

Half an hour later he was giving the last touches to the makeshift splints he had made for the puppy. The medicine which he had given the

animal was already working. The puppy was peaceful by now.

"And you say that your parents don't know about this?" he commented after listening to their story. "You shouldn't have gone out alone. Somebody might have kidnapped you. You might have lost your way. Anything might have happened to you. And look at yourself, you are both wet. You might even fall ill."

"We are sorry, Doctor. But both of us couldn't sleep. The puppy was on our minds."

He smiled as he patted both of them. "It's strange how you small children have so much of compassion in you. We adults have become totally insensitive to everything. All we can think about is ourselves and our responsibilities. God bless you, children."

"Uncle how much is your fee?" Kamakshi asked.

The doctor laughed heartily at that.

"How much have you got?"

"We don't have any money with us. But both of us have some in our piggy banks. We will give it to you in the morning," Kartik said.



"But I want my fees now."

Kamakshi looked at Kartik.

"What are you thinking? Give me a kiss now. Both of you!"

They kissed him gladly. And they were full of smiles when they turned to leave.

"How will you go?"

"We'll walk, uncle."

"I'll drop you in my car. It's raining heavily."

"But, uncle..."

"I will not listen to anything. You are coming in my car."

They stared at each other. Kamakshi nodded.

They reached home almost immediately. The distance itself wasn't

much, but the lift was a great help, in the sense that they didn't have to face the wrath of the rain on their way back home.

"Thank you, Doctor uncle," they waved back to the Doctor as he reversed his car.

"Don't ever repeat what you did today, in the future. Not without the knowledge of your parents," the doctor repeated the advice he had given earlier. "And take this puppy to a veterinary doctor the first thing in the morning."

"Right, Doctor," the children said in a chorus.

Getting in without making a noise was a problem.

Kamakshi took out the keys from her pocket and turned the lock as quietly as possible, without making a noise.

They pushed open the door as slowly as they could, but it did make the familiar creaking sound. Silently, they closed the door behind them.

Kartik smiled at Kamakshi. They had got in without anyone noticing them. The dog was fast asleep in Kartik's arms.

Then he sneezed.

He sneezed once again.

The lights came on in their parents' room and

before they could duck for cover, their mother was standing in front of them.

She stared at the children dripping water from their raincoats, and the dog.

"Where have you been?" their shocked mother inquired.

"To fetch this poor dog."

"In this rain? You went out alone?" their father asked, as he joined them. He was furious. The children shrank back in fear.

Their mother restrained him quickly.

"And why did you go out in the rain?"

"Because we couldn't sleep," Kartik replied.

"We couldn't help feeling sorry for the puppy. Look, both his legs are broken," Kamakshi pointed to the splints.

"And who tied those splints?" their father roared at them.

"Our Doctor uncle tied them. He even gave him some medicines."

"You went in search of a doctor in this rain and in the middle of the night?" their mother's mouth was open. "What has come over you? Are you not afraid of anything to have acted so stupidly? You should have told us, taken our help...?"

"I came to you for help. But you told us to sleep and forget about the dog. You even told us that the dog wasn't hurt much. You were wrong," Kartik retorted.

"All right, change your clothes quickly, or else you'll catch a cold."

Mother helped them change while father poured a glass of milk each for them both. He brought a bowl of milk for the puppy too. His eyes were wide open and he started to wag his tail.

The puppy drank the milk greedily, and that told them he had been very hungry. Kartik stroked his back as he finished the milk.

The moment they hit their pillows, they immediately fell asleep. Both were tired after spending the night out in the streets.

The first thing both of them asked of their mother on reaching home from school the next day was the well-being of their puppy.

"He's all right. Your Papa took him to a doctor. He changed the splints and made the puppy a little more comfortable. The legs will heal in about two months. Nothing to worry about."

"Will Papa allow us to

keep the puppy?"

Their mother looked deep into the eyes of her children. "Yes. And despite your foolhardiness, we are both proud of you, my children." She gave them a hug and they clung to her in return, showering her with their kisses.

"We thought you'll beat us, when you caught us," Kartik said. "Papa appeared very angry."

"He was. But the puppy would have certainly died had it not been for the two of you. In a way he feels glad that you saved him."

Kartik and Kamakshi were playing in the evening, outside their home when a white car stopped in front of their house. The by now familiar face of their doctor uncle peeped out of the car.

"Hello, children!" he said lovingly.

"Hi, uncle!" Kamakshi greeted him as she rushed to the car, leaving her friends behind. Kartik joined her too.

"And how is my new patient?"

"He's all right. Thank you for what you did for the puppy last night."

"I did the best I could do. Did you show him to a vet?"

"If you mean the animal doctor, then yes. He'll be

all right," Kamakshi told the doctor. "Papa has even allowed to us keep the dog till he recovers."

"Tell me one thing," the Doctor uncle whispered.

They brought their ears close to him.

"Did you get a scolding for your antics last night?"

"No, uncle. Not at all. Mother and Papa were very good to us. Mother said she is proud of both of us despite our foolhard...what was it?" Kartik frowned as he tried to remember.

"Foolhardiness," Kamakshi reminded him.

Doctor uncle burst into a hearty laugh.

"All right, children, I'll leave now." He ran his hand lovingly over their heads and left.

Both of them waved to the doctor till his car disappeared out of sight.

"Who was he?" one of their friends enquired.

"He is our doctor friend."

"How come you are friends?"

Kartik and Kamakshi looked at each other and smiled.

Then they began to narrate to their friends their little adventure.

Puppy watched them from a distance, his tail wagging in pleasure.

DINOSAURS IN DELHI

A report by Dipavali Debroy

Photographs courtesy: National Science Centre

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

IT is more than 65 million years since the Barapasaurus stomped across the Godavari-Pranhita valley. But dinosaurs are back in India—"American Dinosaurs" and "Indian Dinosaurs" within rather a short distance of each other in the capital.

In fact, dinosaur-awareness has been on the rise in India ever since video copies of the Steven Spielberg film *Jurassic Park* became available a few years ago. Books on dinosaurs—fictional and educational—have begun to be written by Indian authors and published by Indian publishers. Shops are selling dinosaur toys and puzzles—not all of them imported. Decorative dinosaurs crafted in jute, clay and glass and painted in the form of antique miniatures, are being sold. And now full-scale and half-scale models that actually move.

'Back to Jurassic', the 'Mega Dino Show', which began in early October at the Delhi Zoo grounds, has been organised by the Hariparvat Merryland &

Resorts Limited, in collaboration with Dinamations, USA.

'Dinosaurs Alive', the 'completely different show', which started in mid-November at the National Science Centre, Pragati Maidan, is by the National Council of Science Museums. Though the NCSM acknowledges its intellectual debt to the Smithsonian Institute,

Washington, the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and the works of D.B.

Norman, David Lambert and others, it claims to be all-Indian. As announced, it is here till January 10, 1996. The tickets are Rs 20 for adults and Rs 10 for children, with concessions for children in large groups.

The grey structure of the NSC at Pragati



Maidan has multi-coloured scrolls hanging from it, bearing the inscriptions 'Dinosaurs Alive' and *Dinosaur Sajeev* (in Hindi). The gate is a yellow arch, topped by the legend "Pepsi Brings" and flanked by the flight of stairs leading up to the NSC entrance, cut-outs of dinosaurs—*Stegosaurus* and *Tyrannosaurus*, for example—are about. On a balcony above, sits a *Pterodactyl* with gaping mouth and outstretched wings. Inside, the glistening interior, passages and stairs leading down to the exhibition on the ground floor, are marked by dinosaur footprints (in cream) and friezes of dinosaur silhouettes (in pink).

Children, some with parents, some by themselves, but mostly in the company of their school



teachers, throng the passages and the stairs and then, in slow wonder, move past what the show is all about—the dinosaurs themselves. Guards whistle in order to control the crowd.

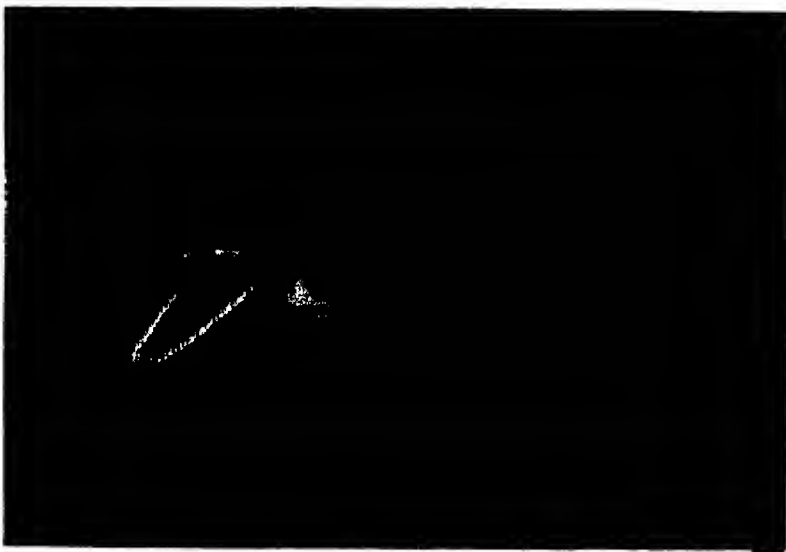
Strange roars and grunts can be heard even before one enters the exhibition, and inside, they fill the ears. The roof is canopied in blue, the floor is matted with green, parts of the walls and room-dividers with a

green-and-brown leafy print. All this, with the reverberating roars, helps re-create the atmosphere of a primeval forest.

On the right, as one enters, is a series of glass blackboards charting, for example, *The Cosmic Evolution* and *The Dinosaur Family*.

On the left, there is a similar series, charting *Fossil Information*, *Dinosaur Remains*, and *Habit and Habitat*. Before them are glass cases displaying exhibits such as eggshell fragments, eggs, teeth, footprints, humerus, and vertebra, received courtesy Geological Survey of India, Gujarat and Jaipur. The humerus, for example, is a fibre-glass cast, but the egg is an original fossil, dating to the Cretaceous period (144-65 million years ago) from the district of Kheda in Gujarat.

Then come the dino-





saur. There are seventeen models of fourteen species. Each model has a chart near it, showing (i) the major sites in which its fossils have been found; (ii) its special features; (iii) its skeletal structure; (iv) its food, habits and modes of defence; and (v) the period of its existence.

Without such a chart, the model itself, however impressive, would not have made much sense. The paintings depicting their food, habits and defence tackle, have a comic touch to them, and give the dinosaurs a friendly face—much needed to counter the ferocious yowls all around.

There are volunteers, college students mostly, a friendly lot, actually volunteering information instead of waiting to be asked.

The first model is that

of an Ankylosaurus. It stands among artificial ferns and blackened wood-chipping. It opens its mouth and turns its tail and has the tail-bone club which marked this species. Next comes a Scelidosaurus, in a cavity with a painted background of primeval landscape, standing among ferns that are plastic and rocks that are painted cloth. But the animal raises its forefoot, moves its neck, and opens its

mouth. The Orinthomimus, placed similarly, holds an egg in a forepaw and rests it on an artificial cactus. This prehistoric monster has a distinctive bark of its own.

Children draw back—some in genuine and some in mock fright—as the Tyrannosaurus Rex that comes next, opens its mouth and the red light falls on its rows of sharp teeth. The main model is half-scale and it has a smaller one beside it, "made one-tenth to the scale. With palms in the background, rocks and ferns and black chips below, both creatures turn their necks and open their mouths.

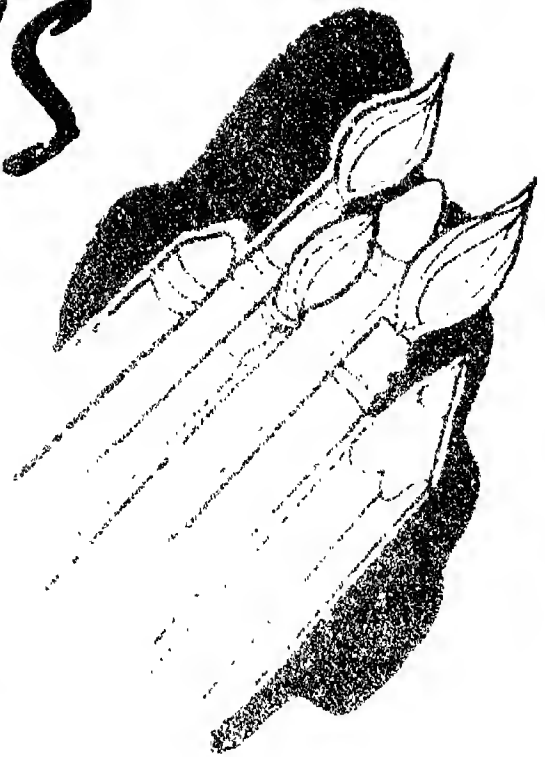
Next comes a unique sight—a treeful of Longisquama—glider-lizards with elongated and coloured dorsal scales.

In the same row, the Diplodocus among the

Turn to page 43



SHANKAR'S ON THE SPOT PAINTING COMPETITION



A DELIGHTFUL
FESTIVAL OF
COLOUR

A report by B.N.



NOW into its 44th year, the Shankar's On-the-Spot Painting Competition was held on November 26, 1995. Though the scene at the Competition changes little from year to year at the Modern School grounds in New Delhi, which has become synonymous with the competition, describing it is reless important.

JAN							FEB							MAR						
7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	31	3	10	17	24								
1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	4	11	18	25								
2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	5	12	19	26								
3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	6	13	20	27								
4	11	18	25		1	8	15	22	29	7	14	21	28							
5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23		1	8	15	22	29						
6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24		2	9	16	23	30						

	APR							MAY							JUN						
S	7	14	21	28		5	12	19	26	30	2	9	16	23							
M	1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24						
T	2	9	16	23	30		7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25							
W	3	10	17	24		8	15	22	29		5	12	19	26							
T	4	11	18	25		9	16	23	30		6	13	20	27							
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S	6	13	20			11	18	25		1	8	15	22	29							

SHANKAR'S ON THE SPOT PAINTING COMPETITION



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...AND THOUGHTS...

	OCT							NOV							DEC						
S	6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29							
M	7	14	21	28		4	11	18	24	2	9	16	23	30							
T	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31							
W	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25								
T	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26								
F	4	11	18	25		8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27								
S	5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28							

REEM'S
RCD

THE POWER OF THOUGHTS...

From page 34

	JUL							AUG							SEP						
7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29									
1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30								
2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24									
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CHILL
MO!



ON THE SPOT PAINTING COMPETITION

There are new participants each year but the anxiety of the adults accompanying the five-to eight-year-olds as they hand over their charges to the volunteers at the Competition remains the same. The barricades are clumsy structures that separate these adults and their wards but none is so high that the children and adults cannot see each other and feel reassured. Some adults even advise the children on what to draw and how, all over the barricades, much to the dismay of the volunteers.

There are two other enclosures to seat the nine-to twelve-year-olds

and the thirteen-to sixteen-year-olds. With each passing year the area covered by the competition for seating the participants has been increasing as more and more children take part. They come not only from within the city but also from outlying areas, some even undertaking train journeys of an hour and a half, to reach the venue.

The competition began, this year, at 10.00 a.m. and went on till 1.30 p.m. While many of the youngest participants finished their paintings by 11 a.m., it was difficult to get the older participants to hand in their work when the competition drew to a close, as they pondered over their different strokes.

This year the five-to eight-year-olds were not given any specific subjects to draw. This caught some unawares for, as one child put it, he had not come prepared to draw 'just

anything'.

The nine-to sixteen-year-olds were given ten topics to choose from and could draw as many as six, if they wanted. The subjects given were : 'Putting out a fire', 'In a factory', 'Delhi's changing skyline', 'Machines make life easy', 'Modern day clothes', 'Acrobats', 'What I see from my window', 'Electronic toys/games/classrooms can be fun', 'Animals are lovable', and 'Create a new Olympic sport—depict a new sport that promotes peace and world unity which you would like to see at the Olympic Games 1996'.

The three best paintings will receive the Begum Zaidi Memorial Award, the Shankar's Award and the Children's World Award. There will be 150 other prizes, while about 600 paintings selected for display will receive Certificates of Merit.

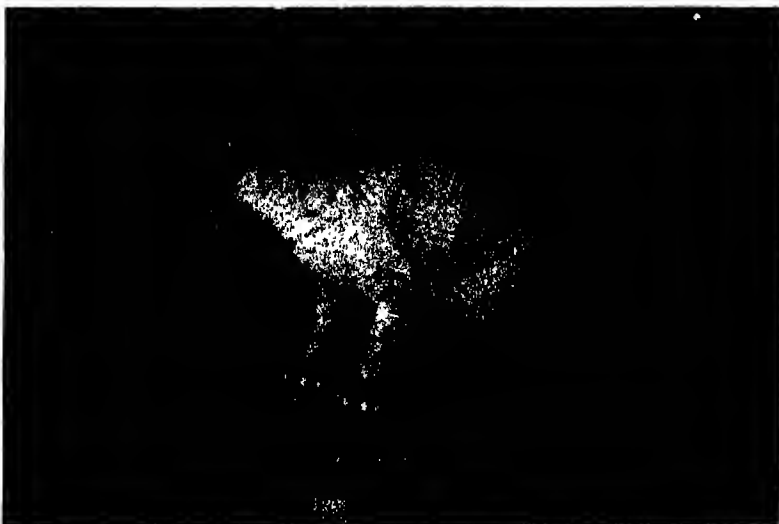
From page 34

cacti, palm stubs and ferns, has a massive body, a long neck and tail.

The Triceratops bends forward its horns, almost touching the palm-fronds before it. Though the joints at its neck show, its roar is truly frightening. Beside it is a smaller model that comes up only to the bigger one's knees.

Diagonally opposite stands the Stegosaurus, turning its neck, looking up and raising its forelegs, and moving even the bony plates that are its special characteristics. When it opens its mouth, roars, and moves its huge eyeballs, it makes up for the joint that shows in its head.

Less intimidating is the Oviraptor, occasionally bending over the egg it holds in its forepaws and is supposedly fond of. It has a short, shrill yowl.



A flickering red glow lights up the environment of green, blue and brown. What follow are huge grey Apatosaurus that turn their heads, a Pterodactyl sitting on a rock and waving its wings, a green-and-yellow Archaeopteryx flying on to a tree, the Parasaurophus nodding its long, hollow crest, and the Spinosaurus with sail-like fins on the back.

All through, there is the

background music of roars and howls, barks and yowls.

Towards the Exit, there is an exhibition entitled 'A to Z of DINOS'. The display-boards show a tiny and comical figure, white-bearded and *dhoti*-clad answering queries on various aspects of dinosaurs. For example 'Hello Rex! Why Small Hands?', 'What's Special About Dino Hearts?', 'Did Dinos Make Families?' and 'How Brainy Were They?'

Outside, there is a stall put up by the NCSM, the 'Dino-souvenir Shoppe'. It sells T-shirts stamped with dinosaurs, Magic-snappers—tiny dinosaur figurines which snap on to anything—key-rings with tiny dinosaurs, a glossy poster and, of course, books on dinosaurs, like *Your Dino Cut-Out Album*, *My Dino Pops Up* and *My Dinosaurs*, all of them



NCSM publications.

There are other stalls selling dinosaur mementos. 'Wonderland' from Calcutta, for example, sells dino-puzzles, stuffed colourful soft-toys in the form of dinosaurs, water-bottles in the shape of dinosaurs, plastic Tyrannosaurus Rexes to be assembled, and books on dinosaurs in both English and Bengali. Another stall sells *Dinosaurs*, a book of short stories (Rs.30) brought out by the Publications and Information Directorate, CSIR, to time with the NCSM show. The tea-stall has thermocol cut-outs of dinosaurs holding plastic cups of tea and coffee. Popcorn, fast food, and sandals too, are on sale.

Just a little beyond, in the NSC auditorium, films and multi-screen projections have an almost continuous run from 12 to

8.15 p.m. The documentaries relating to dinosaur fossils and ape-men's jaw formations are obviously from abroad. But 'The World of Dinosaurs', with a Hindi commentary, is a NCSM production. It does not draw crowds, but it is definitely part of the show with its references to the Barapasaurus skeleton at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, detailed depictions of various dinosaur species,



descriptions of their evolution and analysis of their possible causes of extinction, and picturization of dinosaurs, if and when they begin to walk the city streets.

The adjacent exhibition on 'Global Changes', another NCSM presentation, is less attractive. It depicts the environmental changes on earth through the ages and charts Pollutants, Dying Species and Vanishing Greens. But there are only a couple of charts of direct relevance, and on one, the switch which is supposed to be pressed to show the transition of the eras, does not work. There are only a few stragglers visiting this exhibition. Only a few press for souvenirs at the counter outside it.

At the entrance there is a little boy screaming, "Mummy, *nahin* (no)" and refusing to be dragged inside. There are one or two others inside who draw back from the life-like models, especially when they emit their roars. "*Yeh to sachmuch ke nahin hain* (This is not real-life)," a teacher of Rose Diamond Public School finds it necessary to tell her pupils. But slightly older children find it fun. While some take down notes (as per in-

structions from parents and teachers), others giggle at the prehistoric



giants and roar back when they roar. A student of Class Eight, K.P. Montessori School, Khurja, scoffs at the idea of being scared, "*Yeh hakiquat thori hi hai* (This is hardly real)!"

This is a hopeful sign for the future of science in India. It indicates that a rational attitude has made its way into the Indian population, at least into a section of it, the section that matters. The children, by and large, have accepted that models of now-extinct species can be constructed and animated on scientific principles.

But how exactly did the NCSM achieve such construction and animation?

This was entirely an in-house affair of the NCSM. The NCSM has its headquarters in Calcutta and comes under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Apart from Delhi, it has centres all over India, such as the Birla Industrial and Technological Museum, Calcutta, Nehru Science Centre, Bombay, and Visheshwaria Industrial and Technological Museum, Bangalore.

The NCSM, a couple of years ago, had taken the decision to manufacture

robotic dinosaurs, because it realised it had the capability to do so—infrastructure, workshops, and working teams of engineers and technicians. The money came basically from the Ministry of HRD. The load of the project was divided among the four main centres. Of the 14 species to be re-constructed, six fell to the lot of Calcutta, four to Delhi, and two each to Bombay and Bangalore.

Sunil Kumar, Curator, BITM, Calcutta, explained the process of manufacture.

First, scientists at the NCSM studied fossil information and skeleton details. Second, they consulted experts, for example, from the GSI. Third, they designed the dinosaur in question, say, the *Tyrannosaurus Rex*. Two models were designed, the bigger one half-scale, the smaller one to the scale of one-tenth. (Not all dinosaurs were of reduced scale. The *Scelidosaurus*, for example, was full-scale.) The inner structure of the smaller model was aluminium, but that of the bigger one had to be of steel so as to be able to carry the weight that it would have to bear.

Fourth, the mechanism

to move the joints of the model was finalised. The mechanism used pneumatic or compressed-air cylinders. Such a cylinder operates through the controlled inlet and exit of air. It has a piston inside and two air inlets spaced apart from each other. When compressed air goes into the cylinder through the first inlet, the piston inside moves forward, and so does the limb concerned. When air from that inlet stops coming in, and air is sent in through the other inlet, the piston moves backwards as does the limb. The air inlets are switched on and off according to computer programmes. When to switch the first inlet on, when to switch it off and switch the other one on, is all programmed.

The pneumatic control mechanism was tested on the 'prototype' or the

smaller model first and, once it was found to be satisfactory, it was extended to the bigger one.

Right up to their plastic eyeballs (with light-bulbs at the back), this is how the dinosaurs function.

The fifth step was to make a clay model (in the scale decided upon, that is, half) of the Tyrannosaurus being re-constructed. Minor details were taken care of. The skin was textured as per fossil information.

The sixth step was to pour plaster of Paris on top of the clay model and remove the mould.

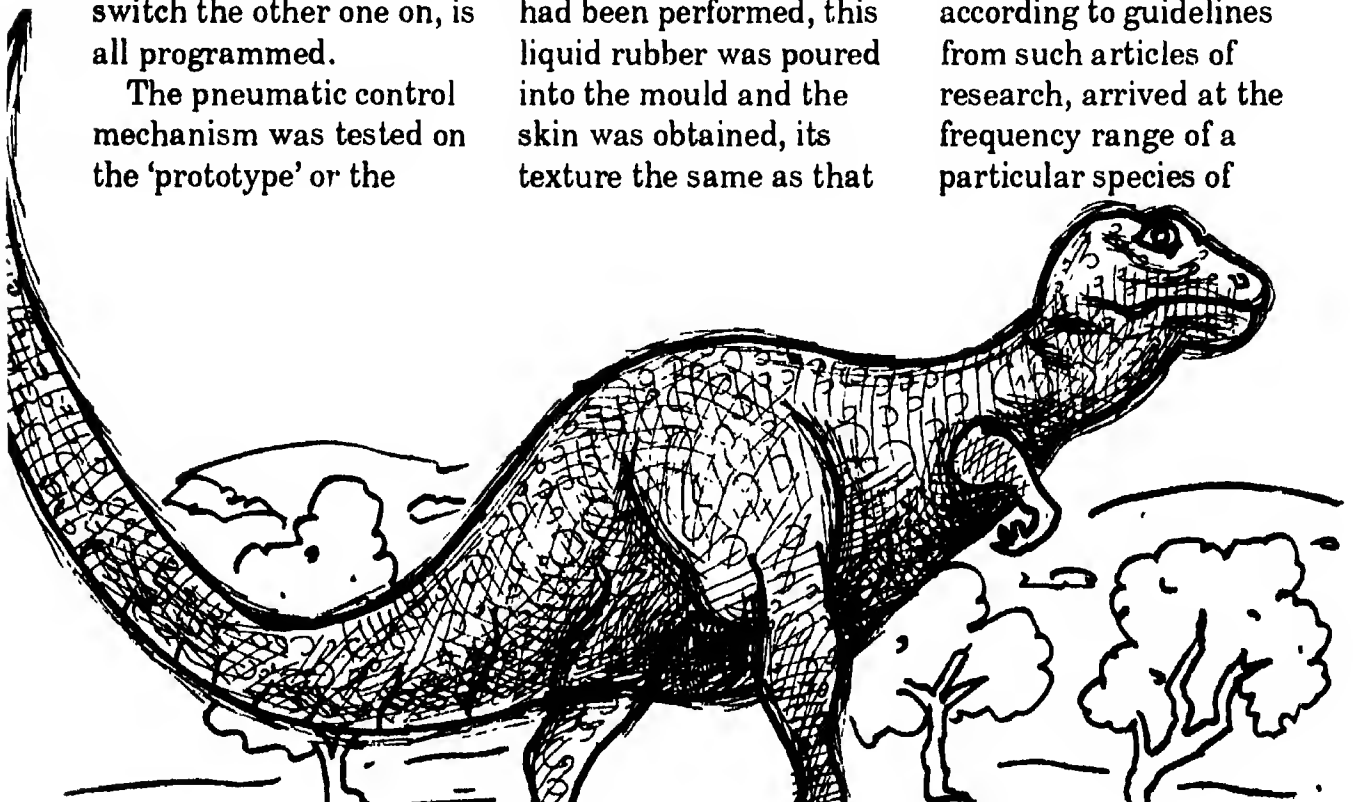
Seventh, a specially compounded rubber was prepared in the laboratory at Calcutta. After necessary tests of its durability had been performed, this liquid rubber was poured into the mould and the skin was obtained, its texture the same as that

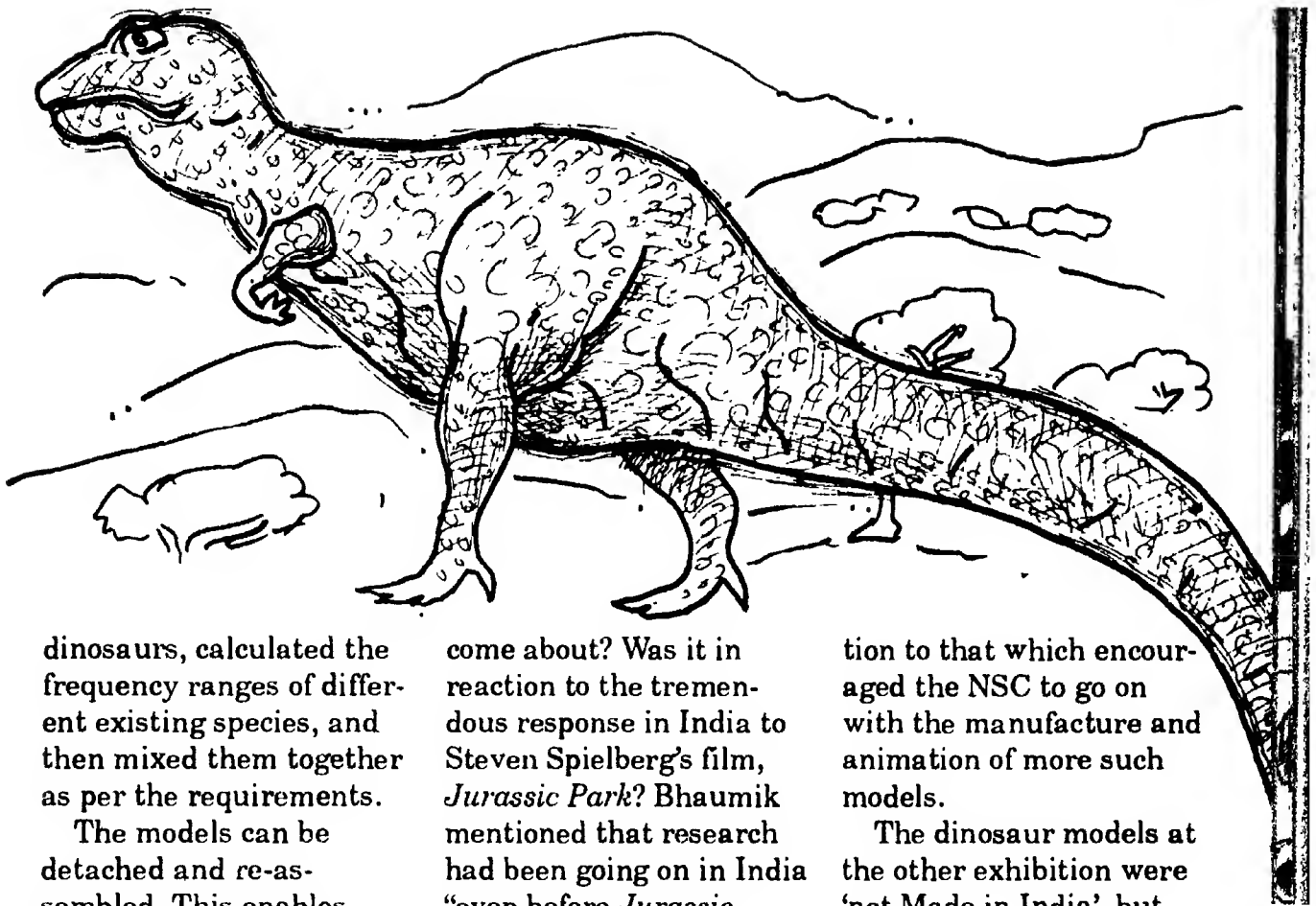
of the clay model.

Eighth, the skin was now stretched on the steel framework of the model, a purely engineering feat.

Ninth, although the smaller model had already been tested, the bigger one was tested again. It took some time to perfect the synchronization between the computer programmes and the actual movements. Application problems had to be sorted out.

The tenth and last step was that of creating the sound effects. Scientific research had shown that the dimensions of the throat can give a clue as to the possible frequency range of the sound made by that particular species of animal. The NCSM, according to guidelines from such articles of research, arrived at the frequency range of a particular species of





dinosaurs, calculated the frequency ranges of different existing species, and then mixed them together as per the requirements.

The models can be detached and re-assembled. This enables easy transportation.

P.K. Bhaumik and T. Ganguli of the NSC estimate the direct investment or material cost to have been more than one-and-a-half crores. The organization of the exhibition—every time—is likely to cost about Rs.50 lakhs. Nevertheless, the fact that they stress remains, “Our own people have done it, and done it with indigenous materials.” Not merely that. Bhaumik points out that the “hundred per cent Indian” dinosaurs are “world class” as well, and “can go abroad and earn foreign exchange”.

But how did the show

come about? Was it in reaction to the tremendous response in India to Steven Spielberg’s film, *Jurassic Park*? Bhaumik mentioned that research had been going on in India “even before *Jurassic Park*, although in a subdued way”.

While the success of *Jurassic Park* demonstrates that a big gimmick can draw a lot of people, the purpose of this particular show, said Bhaumik, is not merely entertainment, but education through a process of entertainment. That is why the dinosaurs have been constructed with such a “solid base”, with skin texture and background faithfully reproduced. Earlier the NSC had developed the first robotic dinosaur—a Triceratops that was displayed at the 1995 Republic Day Parade. It was the reac-

tion to that which encouraged the NSC to go on with the manufacture and animation of more such models.

The dinosaur models at the other exhibition were ‘not Made in India’, but were on loan from the U.S.A. The “action”—the snapping of jaws, the moving of limbs—impressed most of the children pressing upon the fencing to get a better look. The “sound” too—the howls and roars—did build up quite an atmosphere. But, of course, they testified to the ingenuity of Americans, not Indians. The other striking difference was that they were being displayed in the open, under temporarily erected sheds with thatched roofs. The backdrop was not so perfectly re-created, the rocks at the feet of the dinosaurs were often painted—as in

a rural theatre show. But the foliage of the Delhi zoo showed through the wood and bamboo of the walls of the sheds. The logs supporting the shed, the wooden fencing and the tall grass round the models, made the surroundings more natural. Cries of zoo creatures mingled with the roars that sounded from the speakers at the feet of the models. This gave the show a natural advantage. Also, the Tyrannosaurus Rex there—which had a whole shed to itself—was certainly monumental, much more awe-inspiring than the T.Rex at the NSC. (It would have made the greenish one outside the Museum of Natural History look quite puny.) Perhaps the models were indeed “life-size”, as claimed. The baby dinosaur popping out of its egg was, on the other hand, considered “so cute”. Here too, there were educational displays at the entrance (‘The Evolution of Life’ and ‘The Discovery of Dinosaurs’), and fossil exhibits. Some literature on dinosaurs was also being distributed. Outside, there were quite a few shops selling souvenirs and mementos—

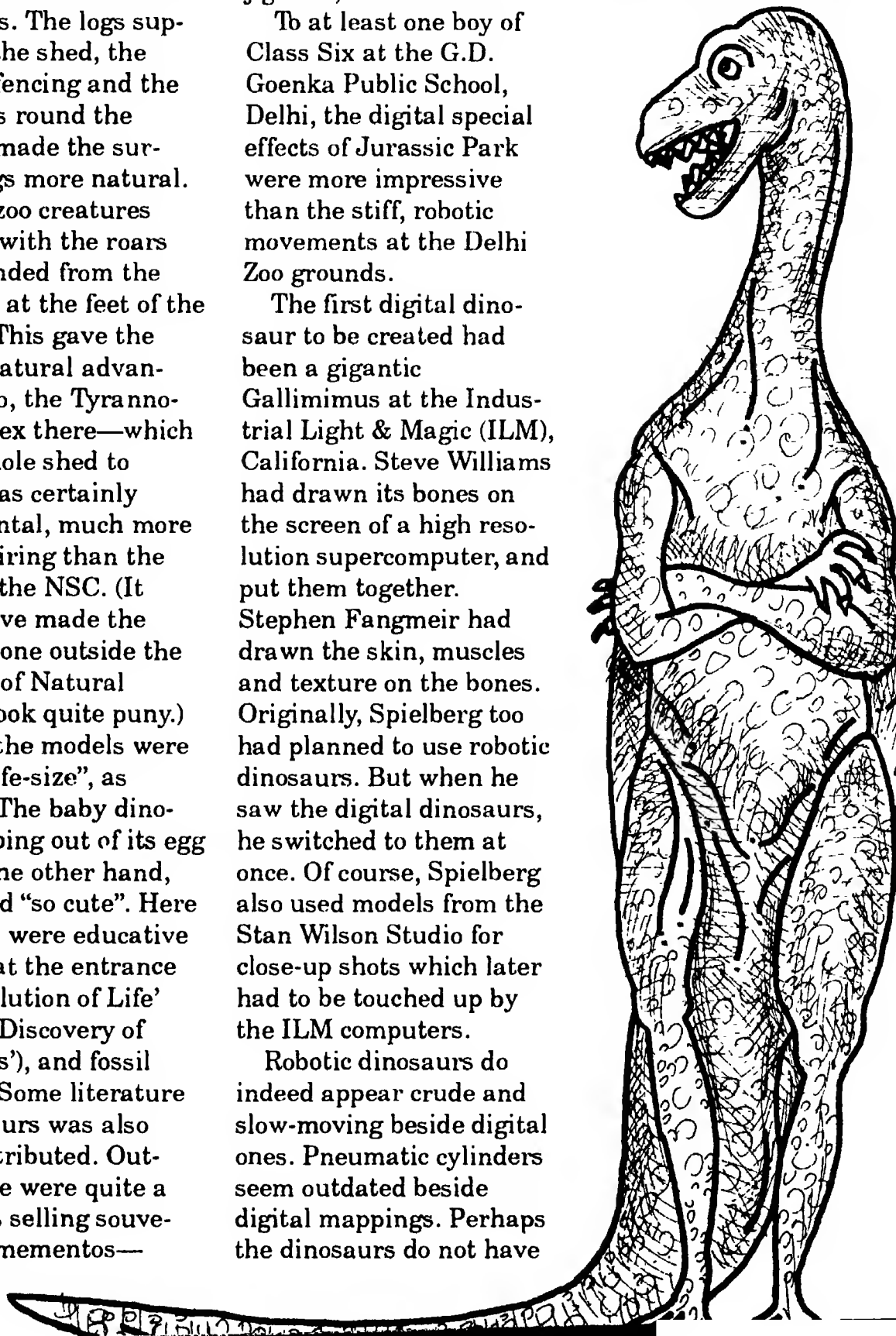
battery-operated toy dinosaurs, three-dimensional dino-stickers, dino-jigsaws, the whole lot.

To at least one boy of Class Six at the G.D. Goenka Public School, Delhi, the digital special effects of Jurassic Park were more impressive than the stiff, robotic movements at the Delhi Zoo grounds.

The first digital dinosaur to be created had been a gigantic Gallimimus at the Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), California. Steve Williams had drawn its bones on the screen of a high resolution supercomputer, and put them together. Stephen Fangmeir had drawn the skin, muscles and texture on the bones. Originally, Spielberg too had planned to use robotic dinosaurs. But when he saw the digital dinosaurs, he switched to them at once. Of course, Spielberg also used models from the Stan Wilson Studio for close-up shots which later had to be touched up by the ILM computers.

Robotic dinosaurs do indeed appear crude and slow-moving beside digital ones. Pneumatic cylinders seem outdated beside digital mappings. Perhaps the dinosaurs do not have

much of a future after all. At least the kind at the Delhi Zoo grounds and the National Science Centre.





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BER

THE TREE THAT BATTLES NATURE

**Text: Preeti Ramesh
CEE-NFS**

**Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chaudhury**

WITH the beginning of January, the fruit markets are flooded with numerous varieties of *ber*. Globose and reddish-yellow in colour, with a distinctive smell, the jujube (*ber*) is a cheap and nutritious fruit that grows abundantly in the northern regions of India.

The *ber* fruit is known to have been consumed by people as long back as 1500 B.C. In India and China, it is known to have been cultivated for the past 400 years. The *ber* fruit has been referred to in ancient texts of the Vedic era. In the *Ramayana*, the *ber* has been mentioned as being the humble offering of a poor devotee, Shabari, to Lord Rama during his exile. In some parts of India, the fruit is used in religious offerings by Hindus.

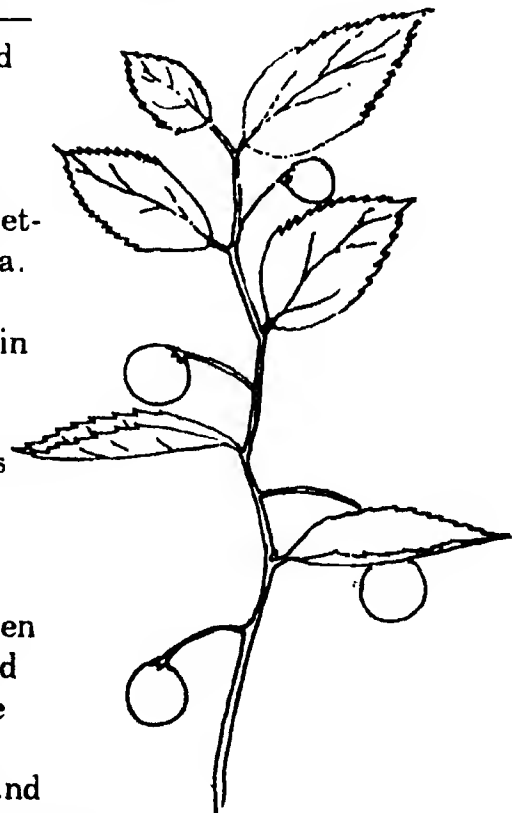
The tree belongs to the genus *Zizyphus* and the order *Rhamnaceae*. It is also found in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, China, Australia, and Africa. In India the *ber* tree thrives in the plains of Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. There are two main groups of jujubes found in India—the Chinese jujube and the Indian jujube.

Zizyphus mauritiana (Indian jujube) and its several cultivated varieties are popular in India. The Chinese variety which was introduced in India did not become popular as it did not propagate easily and is not cultivated widely.

A resilient tree

A small and evergreen tree that thrives in arid conditions, the *ber* tree can grow in soil types varying from laterite and

black cotton to moderately saline soils. The *ber* tree loves sunlight and grows well in sunny, open areas. It can withstand adverse conditions of drought and frost with equanimity. The tree adapts to arid conditions with amazing resilience by rapidly developing tap roots.



Ber trees grow in clumps and bushes in the wild. The old leaves of the tree fall during the months of March and April and new leaves appear almost simultaneously. Flowers appear in small clusters between April and October and the fruits ripen during the next five months, from October to March. The flowers are tiny and greenish-yellow in colour. The leaves of the *ber* tree are three-nerved, ovate, and minutely toothed along the sides. The leaves alternate with thorns (which are absent in some cultivated varieties) and have grey or russet brown undersides.

The *ber* tree is hardy and can be propagated easily. The seeds which are dispersed by birds and animals germinate in the rainy season. The ease with which the jujube tree propagates makes it part of the characteristic landscape of desert regions where this tree is found in profusion.

The *ber* fruit

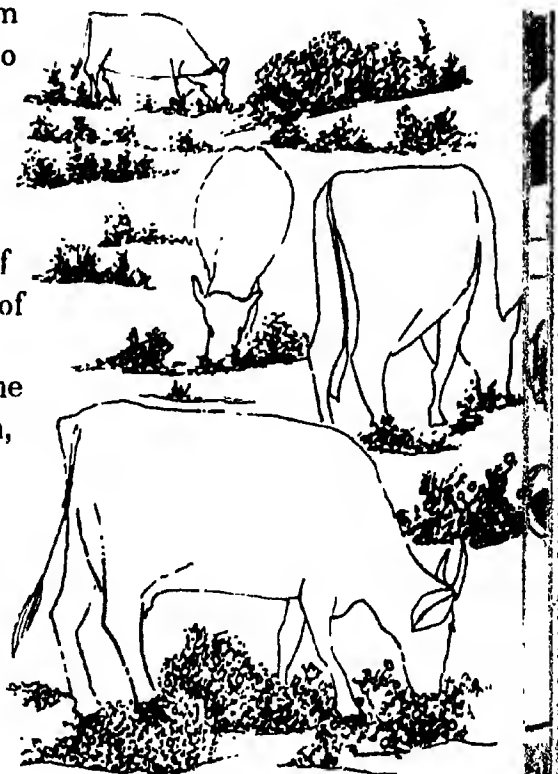
Cultivated *ber* fruits are larger by nearly two inches and less globose than the wild varieties. Wild *ber* tends to be sour and rounder and just

about half an inch long. The varieties of *ber* appear in the market according to their ripening time. The first yield begins to appear in January. It includes *Safeda*, *Rohtaki*, *Gola*, *Seo Nazuk*, and *Dandan* which ripen from the middle of February to the middle of March. In March and beginning of April, *Chuheara*, *Ilaichi*, *Noki*, *Wallaiti* enter the market and by the end of April and the beginning of March, *Umram* and *Sanaur* are available. The *ber* fruits are eaten fresh, candied, or dried like raisins. The stones are hard and have two seeds inside. Oil is extracted from these seeds.

The *ber* fruit is fleshy and firm when ripe, but when dried, its skin wrinkles up. It is believed to have medicinal value and is used in preparing *Joshanda*, a medicine used in relieving chest complaints. *Ber* fruits do not ripen after being picked from the tree and as unripe fruits are not commercially profitable, the *ber* is harvested when fully ripe. The fruits are a good source of vitamin C, sugars and minerals. Costing Rs.3 to 8 a kilo, they are also called the poor man's apple.

The Kalpavriksha

In regions where the *ber* tree is cultivated or grows wild, it provides succour to man and animal alike. Almost all parts of the *ber* tree are of some



use or the other. The leaves are considered good fodder for cattle and goat; in summer months when vegetation dries up in the arid lands, the *ber* tree is the only greenery that is left unscathed. In some areas of Rajasthan the *ber* tree provides the only food for cattle. Many believe that the leaves have astringent properties.

The bark contains 4-9% of tannin and is some-

times used for tanning purposes. The bark is also used by local communities as an effective treatment for diseases and as an astringent. The wood of the *ber* tree is generally hard and durable and is used for making agricultural implements in villages. It is also used as fuelwood and in making

charcoal. But the wood spoils if exposed to water for a long time. A decoction of the bark is used for treatment of diarrhoea and dysentery by rural folk. Branches of the *ber* tree are used for fencing. The *ber* tree is also host to the lac insect (*Coccus lacca*). Lac ornaments are considered to be auspi-

cious and are very popular in India.

Making survival of man and animal easy in the harsh climes where it grows, the *ber* is a remarkable species that can withstand the challenges of nature and flourish in conditions where other species give up without a fight.

Dancing Drops

Mili Bhardwaj (14)



I grow a couple of wings and prepare to fly
Whenever I hear the call of the wind
I race across the mustard farm
The mangrove, the honey swarm
Till I reach the enchanted land
Where silent pine trees gracefully stand
The innumerable angels slowly drop
Their steady voices never can stop
They dance around my muddy feet
A beautiful sight; for the eyes a treat
The wind is my partner
The wind our dancing floor
We dance with love in our heart
On the singing rock 'n' roll
I cry out my sadness,
The drops wash my tears away
My heart is now free
The feet poised to sway
Before the present becomes a memory
The rain water rushes by
And there is a rainbow—an arch of
happiness
Waving goodbye

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chaudhury

STORY : GOPI GAUBA
ILLUSTRATED BY : Beejee



CHEETA, HARISH, PAJA,
OMI AND POPO ARE
COUSINS. SALLY IS
HARISH'S ALSATIAN.
ONE AFTERNOON...

FROM ANNIE'S CREEK
OMI? IT'S SO FAR
BESIDES, AREN'T YOU
HUNGRY? COME IN,
ALL OF YOU.

I WANT CLAY
FOR THE KILN.



DO WE REALLY
WANT THIS CLAY?

YES, WE DO
POPO, I DO. AND
I'M GOING TO
ANNIE'S
CREEK.



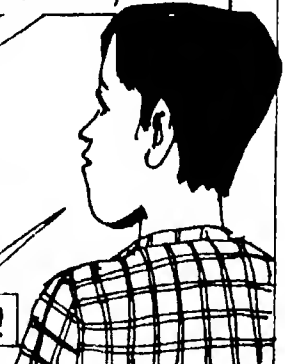
TEA IS READY. HURRY. DADDY AND I ARE GOING FOR THE EVENING SHOW AT THE THEATRE. WE'LL BE HAVING DINNER AT THE CLUB. DON'T GET INTO TROUBLE.



A LITTLE LATER...

LET'S GO. THE CREEK MAY FILL UP IF WE'RE LATE AND WE WON'T GET ANY CLAY.

HARISH, LEAVE SALLY BEHIND. SHE'LL BE IN THE WAY.



SHE WON'T!

AT ANNIE'S CREEK

HEY! THIS ISN'T CLAY, IT'S TAR!



IT HAS TO BE WASHED MANY TIMES BEFORE IT CAN BE USED RAJA. HELP ME FILL THESE BUCKETS FAST. IT'LL SOON BE DARK.



WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CREEK?



AN ISLAND. SHALL WE GO OVER CHEETA?

HOW FAR IS IT?

RIGHT HERE.



AT THE ISLAND

COME ON HERE, ALL OF YOU. WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? LOOK, THERE'S A HUT ON THIS SIDE.



WHAT'S WRONG WITH SALLY? ASK HER NOT TO JUMP ON THE DOOR. IT LOOKS READY TO FALL OFF. THERE, SALLY'S NOSE IS STUCK IN THE DOOR. SHE DOES LOOK FUNNY.



COME, LET'S HAVE A LOOK



WHO DO YOU THINK LIVES HERE?

BANDITS

LET'S PUT THE DOOR BACK.

WHAT'S INSIDE THE CHEST?





THE MEN GET OFF THE BOAT.



WHAT'S THAT MAN DOING?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.



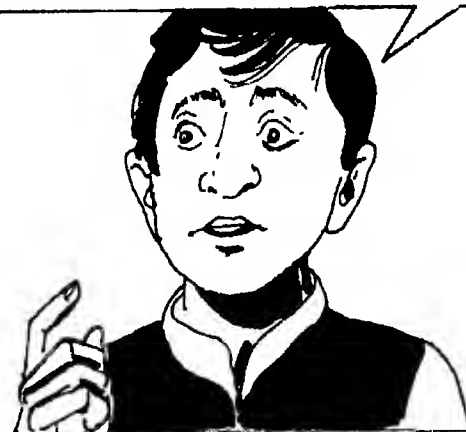
LOOK AT HIM
CLEANING THE
FISH. UGH!

A...A...CHOO!

SORRY, THE
SAND'S GOT
INTO MY NOSE.



THESE MEN LOOK DANGEROUS. THEY
MIGHT DO ANYTHING. RAJA, TAKE
THEIR BOAT AND GET THE POLICE.
I SHALL DISTRACT THEIR ATTENTION...







RAJA TELLS UNCLE CHIBBER
ABOUT THEIR ENCOUNTER
WITH THE SMUGGLERS.



YOU CHILDREN GET INTO
DRY CLOTHES WHILE I
GET IN TOUCH WITH THE
POLICE. YOU'LL HAVE TO
SHOW US THIS ISLAND.

MEANWHILE ON THE ISLAND

AACHOO...AACHOO!!
?



WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?



LET HIM GO.
YOU BEAST.



CONT'D



The Umbrella that wouldn't get lost

Story: Santhini Govindan

Illustrations: Seema Pandey

THIS story is about an umbrella—a very ordinary, small, black umbrella. He lived on the bottom shelf of a shop that sold umbrellas. Just before the monsoon season started, the umbrella shop was a very crowded, noisy, and busy place! There were dozens and dozens of umbrellas displayed there—big ones and small ones, bright ones and dull ones—umbrellas in almost every size and colour you could think of, in fact! There were umbrellas in gay, floral prints, and bright, polka-dotted ones

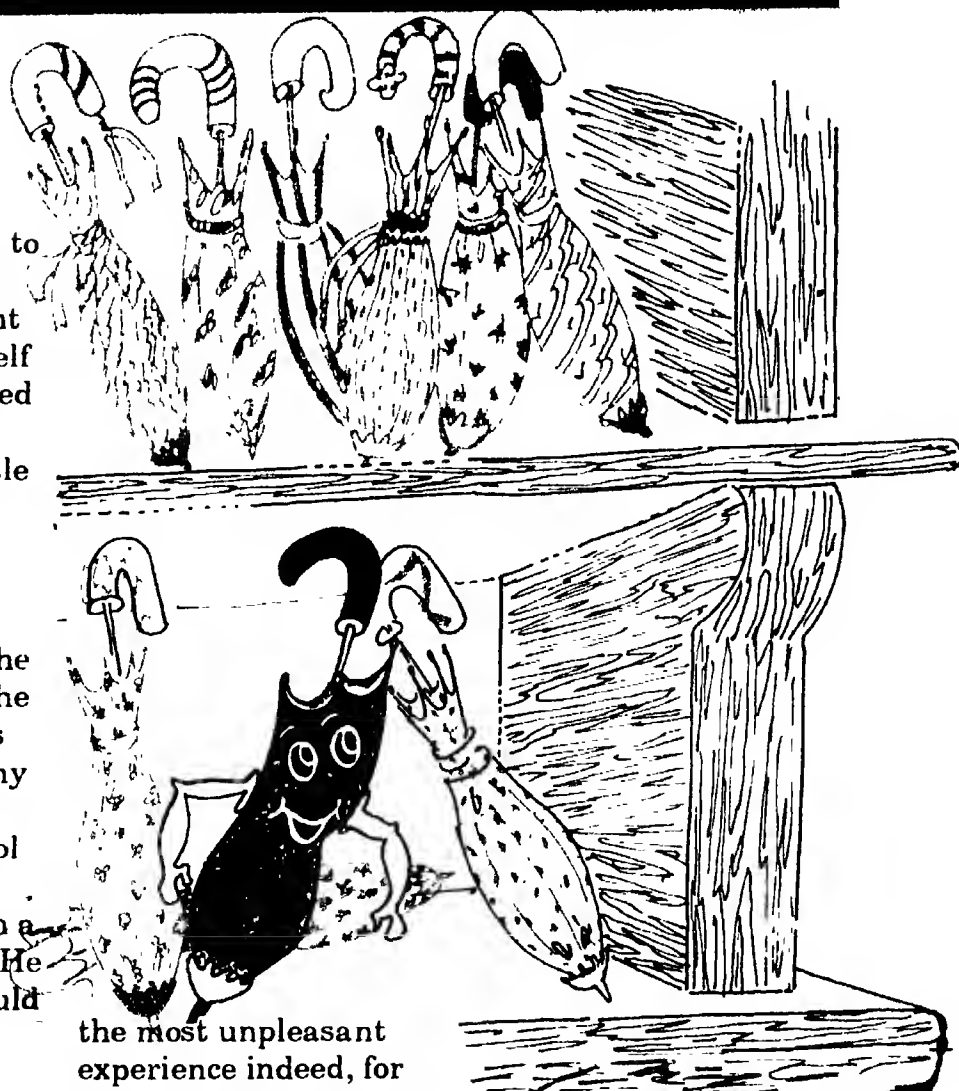
too. There were umbrellas with fancy handles and cases, and sombre, black ones as well. Shiny, silk umbrellas on the shelves, nudged bright, cheerful ones for children. And as customers thronged the shop to take their pick, the excited umbrellas opened their skirts proudly, and chattered and talked amongst themselves. Most of them were brand new, and all of them were thrilled indeed at the thought of belonging to someone, and venturing out into their first monsoon!

But the little, black

umbrella, sitting forlornly on the bottom shelf, did not join in their eager discussions. In fact, nobody noticed him at all, or even addressed a single remark to him. You see, the little, black umbrella was an old, unsold model of two seasons ago. His skirt was shabby and faded in places, and his handle was scratched. He did not look very attractive, and so the shopkeeper had tucked him away out of sight. The little umbrella was very sad about this of course, for he also wanted very much to be sold to some-

one too, and he wanted to go out into the rain as well! Hidden away, right down on the bottom shelf of the shop, there seemed so little chance of this happening, that the little umbrella was quite resigned to his fate.

But he kept his ears open, and listened very carefully indeed to all the conversation between the other umbrellas. And as he did so, he learnt many interesting things. He heard how the fresh, cool raindrops would fall on the umbrella backs with a delightful pitter-patter. He heard how the wind would play games with them, and toss them about, sometimes even carrying them away! He listened to tales of terrifying thunderclaps that came during the monsoon, and flashes of bright lightning too! And the little umbrella also learnt about the worst fate that could ever befall an umbrella—getting lost! Apparently umbrellas, even the best and smartest ones, got lost frequently in the monsoon, because people—absent-minded creatures that they were—were always forgetting them somewhere! Getting lost in a busy city on a wet, rainy day, was



the most unpleasant experience indeed, for once lost, an umbrella, rarely, if ever, saw his proud owner, and home again!

Dreadful indeed, were the adventures that might befall him then, and the little, black umbrella heard that a lost umbrella might be 'stolen', and sometimes land up in the most frightening and inhospitable places. He shuddered when he heard this, and made up his mind at once that, if he were ever sold, and were to belong to somebody too, he would make sure that he would never ever get lost! But then he sighed—

a long, deep sigh of regret. Languishing way down on a dark shelf of the shop, where there were so many other wonderful umbrellas, who would ever want to buy him?

But strange things do happen sometimes you know, and the very next day, a lady came into the shop, looking for an umbrella for her eleven-year-old son. Since he was a rather careless boy, who had already lost two new umbrellas during the previous monsoon, she did not want to spend too much money on another umbrella for him.

"Do you have anything going cheap?" she asked the shopkeeper, leaning over the counter. "All the umbrellas in the shop window are more costly than what I'm looking for..."

The shopkeeper shook his head, and the lady turned away disappointed. Then, the shopkeeper remembered the little, black umbrella. "Wait!" he called out, "I may have just the thing for you!"

He reached under the counter, and took out the little, black umbrella, and opened him with a click. "It's in perfect working condition," he said, patting the little umbrella's back firmly, "but since it's an old model and a little faded, I'll let you have it at half-price!"

"Done," said the lady with a satisfied smile, and before he knew it, the little, black umbrella had been sold, and was riding



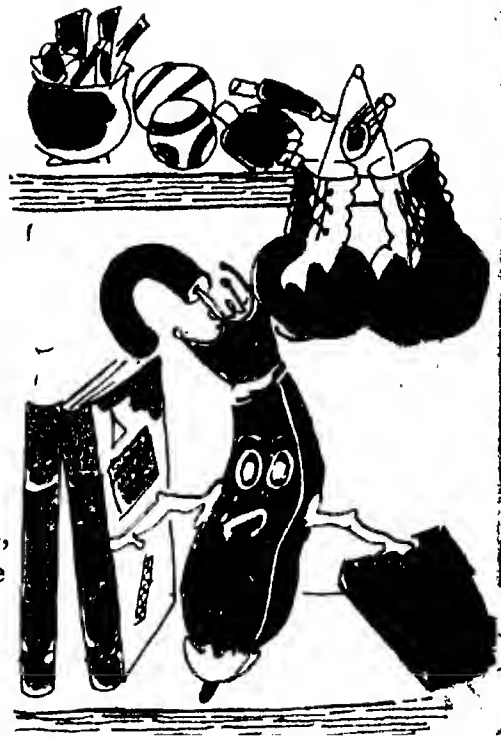
home in the lady's shopping bag! How excited he was, and how deliriously happy too! He couldn't believe his luck! He had been sold at last!

But when he reached the lady's home, and met his new owner, his spirits fell a little. For the little boy, Rajesh, to whom he was to belong, wasn't pleased to see him. In fact, he didn't even seem to like him very much.

"What an umbrella!" he said rudely, pushing away the little, black umbrella roughly. "It's so old and ugly! I don't want it! All my friends have such new, colourful umbrellas..."

"Well, this is all that you are going to get..." said his mother firmly. "You are a very careless boy! Have you forgotten the two nice, new umbrellas you lost last year? You must learn to look after your things carefully in future. Perhaps, then I'll buy a better umbrella for you... And anyway, there's nothing to grumble about. This is a perfectly good umbrella, in working condition..."

But Rajesh glared at the umbrella balefully, and muttered under his breath, "I'm going to lose this umbrella, the first chance I get," he vowed. "I



don't like it at all, and I'll make sure I'm rid of it!"

Then the little umbrella was put inside Rajesh's cupboard, where he stayed quietly for the next few days. Then, one eventful day, he was finally taken out by Rajesh's mother who shook him out before opening him up, and giving him to Rajesh. Rajesh held him up rather glumly, wearing a sullen frown on his face. But the little umbrella was far too excited to be put out by this! He was eager to savour his first outing in the monsoon, and he bobbed along cheerfully, buffeted by the gusts of cool wind. And when the first, big drops of rain fell on his back with a PLOP!

PLOP! he couldn't believe his ears. Nothing had prepared him for how wonderful the raindrops felt! The little umbrella just loved the rain!

The rain continued to fall in a steady drizzle and, as Rajesh twirled his umbrella round and round, the raindrops bounced merrily off the umbrella's back. Then it was time for Rajesh to board his school bus, and the little umbrella was folded up, and taken into the crowded bus, full of chattering children, pushing and jostling each other. And what a lot of umbrellas there were in the bus too! The little, black umbrella thought he recognised a few familiar ones from the shop where he had been before. All at once he was filled with the desire to show off a little—he wanted all those fine, stuck up umbrellas to see that he was just as good as any of them! He started to lean forward eagerly, full of enthusiasm, when he stopped abruptly, and pulled himself back. 'Dear me,' he chided himself. 'What a foolish and thoughtless thing to do!' He was in danger of becoming another forgotten umbrella, if he strayed away from his owner! So,

for the rest of the bus journey, the little umbrella very carefully and conscientiously stayed very close to Rajesh.

But just as it was time to get down from the bus, Rajesh, naughty boy that he was, deliberately gave the umbrella a hard push.

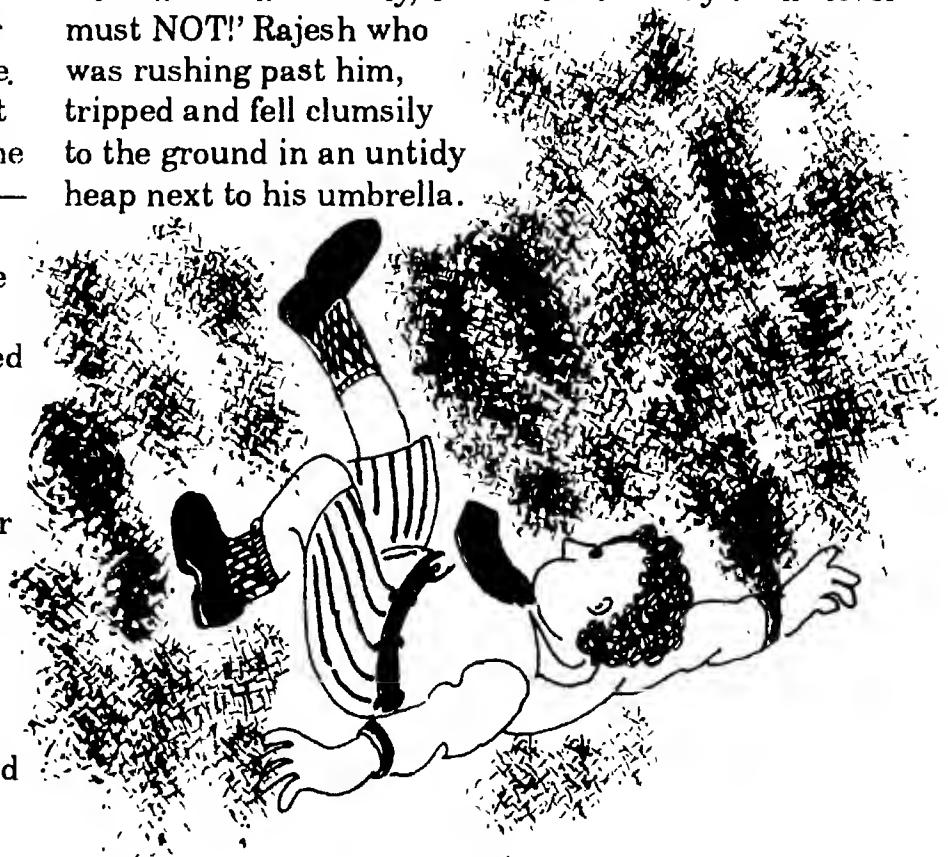
'There,' he thought triumphantly, 'now the umbrella will be lost and maybe I'll get a better one next time!...' The little, black umbrella toppled and fell, but as he did so, he lunged forward, and desperately and valiantly, hooked his curved, black handle round Rajesh's ankle.

'I must not get lost,' he told himself frantically, 'I must NOT!' Rajesh who was rushing past him, tripped and fell clumsily to the ground in an untidy heap next to his umbrella.

"Really, Rajesh," scolded the conductor of the school bus loudly, "what an irresponsible boy you are! You must be more careful with your umbrella." He handed back the little umbrella to Rajesh impatiently, and Rajesh took it with a scowl. He glowered at the umbrella who was still trembling in fear and anxiety.

"I'll be rid of you yet..." Rajesh muttered gnashing his teeth in anger, "just you wait and see..."

But the little umbrella who was quite shaken, after coming so close to being lost, was all that more determined to be 'extra careful', and resolved to stay even closer



to Rajesh at all times, so that it would never happen again. And all through that day, as the umbrella lay in Rajesh's school desk, he kept his gaze firmly on him. The moment Rajesh got up from his chair, the umbrella fell to the ground with a noisy clatter, reminding Rajesh that he was there too!

"Rajesh!" his teacher called out angrily, after the umbrella had fallen to the floor twice, "why are you dropping your umbrella to the ground so many times? It's causing such a disturbance to the rest of the class! Please stop it at once!"

Rajesh gave the little, black umbrella a vicious kick, and pushed it right to the back of his desk, burying it behind his books.

'I'm going to leave you there,' he thought spitefully, 'even when I go home in the evening! By tomorrow morning, you will surely be lost and I'll

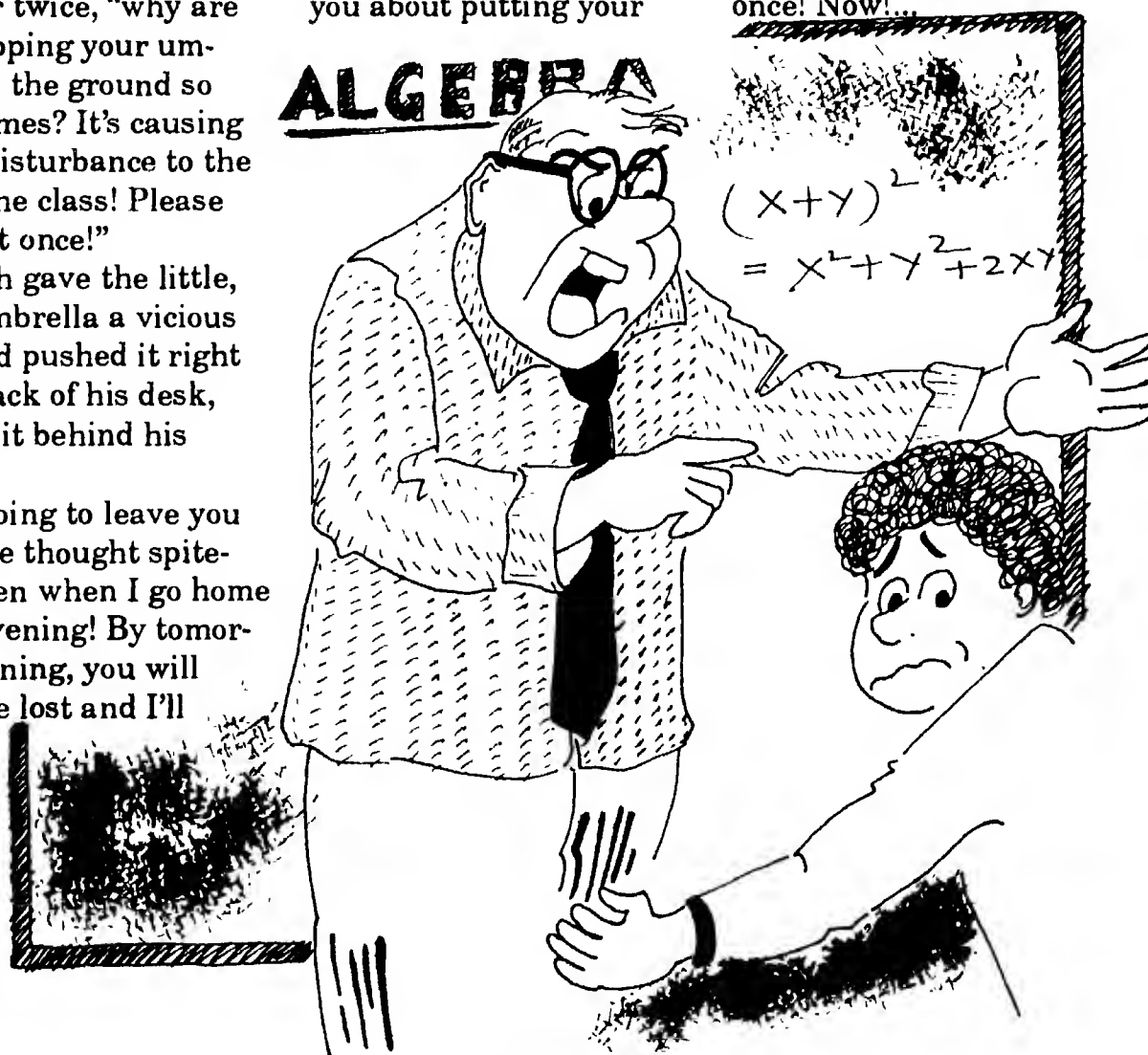
never have to see you again...' But just a few minutes later, when Rajesh got up to go to the teacher's desk to get his work corrected, he heard his friends giggling! The little, black umbrella had pushed his way back determinedly to the front of his desk, and he fell down again with a clatter and opened up!

"Rajesh!" shouted his teacher, who was really furious, "what did I tell you about putting your

umbrella away? Fold it at once and you can take it out with you, and stand outside the class in the verandah for the rest of the hour!"

"But, teacher," said Rajesh with a bewildered look on his face, "I had put it right at the back of my desk, I can't imagine how..."

"Enough," roared the teacher, "that's enough! I don't want ANY explanations from you. Go out at once! Now!..."



And as Rajesh stood outside in the verandah, with the little, black umbrella beside him, he was very angry. He banged the umbrella on the ground and kicked it once again.

"Stupid, stupid umbrella," he muttered, "I never wanted it in the first place, and now it's got me into trouble too! I must get rid of it somehow..." He looked around thoughtfully. The verandah which overlooked a road below, was completely empty and quiet, and Rajesh had an idea. He would hurl the umbrella down to the road below! Someone would surely come along, and pick it up from there soon, and he would be rid of it at last! Rajesh smiled, and seizing the umbrella firmly, got ready to reach far out, and fling it out of the verandah.

But as he extended his hand quickly and forcefully, he found, to his dismay, that the little, black umbrella had shot forward, and hooked itself firmly onto the front of his shirt, round a buttonhole. He shook his hand furiously and pulled at the umbrella vigorously, trying desperately to prise the handle of the umbrella



away from his shirt, but it was of no use. He pulled with all his might, but the umbrella held fast, clinging on resolutely as if it were stuck there with glue! Finally, with a bewildered cry of despair and puzzlement, Rajesh moved back from the edge of the verandah, and let his hands drop limply to the sides. And lo! all at once, the umbrella loosened its vice-like grip on Rajesh's shirt, and fell harmlessly to the ground at his feet.

Rajesh stared at it in surprise and confusion... "What kind of umbrella is this?" he asked himself in

utter bewilderment. "It does seem as if it doesn't want to let me out of sight..." But as he pondered over this fantastic thought, he dismissed it from his mind. It was just too unbelievable to be true! Rajesh took two, quick steps forward and all at once, the handle of the little, black umbrella shot out again and hooked itself firmly round Rajesh's ankle.

"My God," exclaimed Rajesh, staring at the little umbrella in disbelief and with a growing sense of excitement. "Can it possibly be true?" But true it was, for Rajesh soon



found that everytime he experimented excitedly, and tried to run away from the umbrella, it lunged forward immediately and threw its curved handle firmly around his ankles. What an exciting discovery this was for Rajesh!

He picked up the umbrella and looked at it carefully, his eyes full of new respect. Then, he stroked it reverently. "A magic umbrella," he whispered in awestruck tones, "a magic umbrella that won't get lost! And it's mine!" And for the rest of the day, Rajesh could barely sit in class, so excited was he, by his own wonderful discovery about his umbrella. He kept the umbrella very close to him at all times, and when school was over, he could barely wait to get home to see what his special, magic umbrella could do!

But when he came out of school, he found that it was raining very heavily indeed. The wind was blowing furiously, and big, fat raindrops pelted his umbrella at great speed. Rajesh sheltered under a tree. He could hear the distant rumble of thunder too in the sky, and he shifted uneasily. He was a little afraid of thunder, if the truth be told, especially, the great, big claps of thunder that seemed to

tear the very heavens apart.

Then, he saw the school bus lurching slowly towards the school gates, and he ran forward, eager to leap onto it as soon as possible. But alas! as he dashed forward, the little, black umbrella hit one of the low, overhanging branches of the tree, and there was a tearing sound as its sharp edge tore a big hole in the skirt of the umbrella. And as the



raindrops lashed his face, Rajesh looked up at the hole in his umbrella with a sick feeling of dismay. He wouldn't have minded this happening earlier on, but now, when he had just discovered that his umbrella was no ordinary one, but a magic one, he was completely crestfallen!



And on the bus ride home, he clutched his tattered umbrella very anxiously. 'Oh dear,' he thought worriedly, 'I do hope that none of the magic has gone away now that it's torn...'

When Rajesh got home, and showed his mother the torn umbrella sadly, she looked at it resignedly. "Not again," she said with a weary shake of her head. "How careless of you! I think you had better take my umbrella from tomorrow..."

"No! I want this one," said Rajesh firmly, holding it close to his chest. "We can always get it repaired!

The umbrella repair man will put in another skirt for it, and then it will be better than new..."

"But...but," his mother stammered in utter surprise, "I thought you didn't like this umbrella! Why, just this morning you were arguing with me about it..."

"Well, I changed my mind," said Rajesh firmly in a tone that brooked no further discussion. "I won't have any other umbrella! I want only this one! Shall I take it to the umbrella repair man down the road now?"

And he did just that. He chose a colourful, spotted

skirt for his umbrella, and he sat and watched carefully while the umbrella repair man sewed it on to the frame of his umbrella. And when it was finished, the umbrella looked just splendid! But the repairman could not understand why Rajesh dropped the umbrella deliberately and tried to run away, and why he laughed delightedly when the umbrella handle got entangled accidentally round his ankle.

"The magic is still there," said Rajesh clapping. "I've still got the only umbrella that just won't get lost!"



PESKY PROBLEMS

CEE-NFS

Illustration : Nilabho Dhar Chaudhury



They are all around us—in the kitchen, in the bathroom, in the garden, under boxes and bricks—cockroaches, silverfish, rats, flies, mosquitoes. These creatures are a nuisance and carriers of disease. We call them “pests”.

In our never-ending effort to control pests, we resort to the use of chemical insecticides and pesticides. But going by the maxim that prevention is better than cure, our efforts would be more worthwhile if we tried to stop them from occurring in the first place. Here are a few suggestions.

- ★ Even pests need water for survival. Fix leaking taps and do not let water accumulate anywhere in or around your house.

Ensure that the pests do not get anything to feed on. Store cooked and uncooked food in tightly closed containers, even in the fridge. Do not leave kitchen-waste in the dustbin overnight.

Crevices and cracks in the floor, walls and cupboards; dark, and damp corners; piles of twigs and leaves in the garden—these are favourite pest shelters. Try to make sure that your house does not provide such favourable habitats to pests.

Do not extend your hospitality to such pesky guests. Adopt common sense pest-control measures to make your house uninviting for them, and reduce your dependence on chemical pesticides.

CROSSROADS -1

'CURRENTLY YOURS'

S.S.

The first of a series of crosswords, 'currently yours' tests your awareness of world events, the people and places they involved.

CLUES

ACROSS

2. Chief of Microsoft (4, 5)
4. Gyanpeeth Award Winner 1994 (1, 1, 13)
10. Popular sci-film maker (6, 9)
12. Spectacular natural phenomenon seen here (4, 2, 5)
14. African country that the Prime Minister visited (7, 4)
15. Champion woman weightlifter (10)

DOWN

1. Battle-torn area in Sri Lanka (6)
3. Nobel Peace Prize winner from Myanmar (4, 3, 3, 3)
5. Country suspended from the Commonwealth recently (7)
6. Slain Israel leader (7, 5)
7. Political activist hanged to death by the government of an African country (3, 4, 4)
8. International Children's Films Festival, 1995 held here (9)
9. Shooting for gold (6, 4)
11. Venue of International Women's Conference (7)
13. Turkish lady Prime Minister (5, 6)

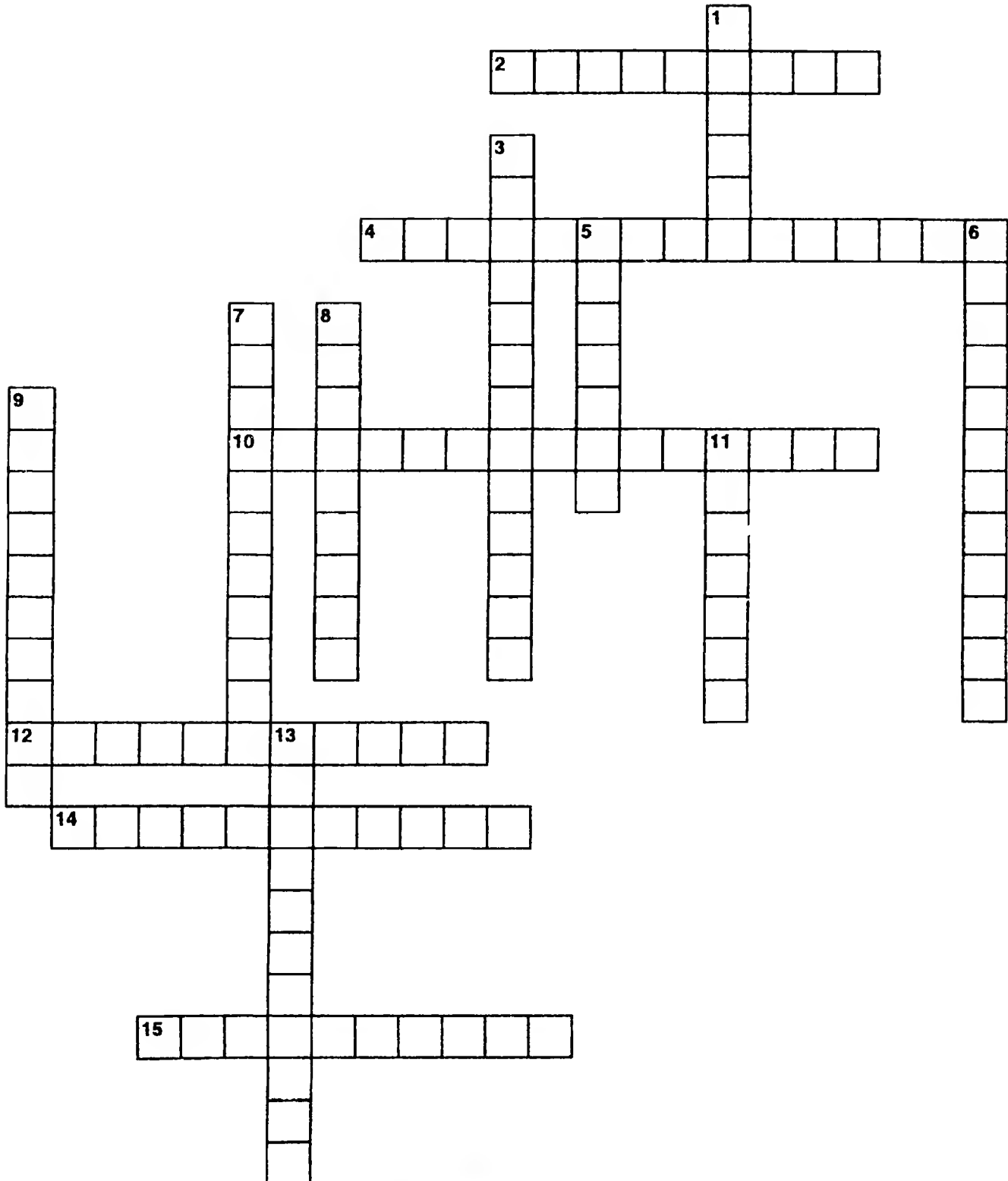
Hurry up and send in the completed Crossword! The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year gift subscription to Children's World. Last date for receiving entries: January 15, 1996.

Answers in February 1996 issue.

Results in March 1996 issue.

CROSSROADS-1

'Currently Yours'



Is 'The Danger Within'?

The Danger Within
By Feisal Alkazi,
Martha Farrel and
Shveta Kalyanwala
Illustrations by Reenie
Produced by Creative
Learning for Change for
PRIA, Society for Par-
ticipatory Research in
Asia,
New Delhi 110062
Price not mentioned.

It is an oft-heard complaint that students today are insensitive and do not give a hoot about the things happening around them. It would be truer to say that they are not made aware of things that matter in life, like the environment, concern for others, compassion towards living things. Or even if this is done, it is not designed to make the student sit up and take notice. It is certain that given the awareness, they would try and get involved and maybe even come up with concrete ideas to improve things.

The Danger Within has been written as an activity book for students, with precisely this in mind. It details the occupational health hazards (OHH) in various industries and even at home, the classroom and offices, which we assume to be free of any hazards to health. There are graphic details about the working conditions in various industries and services, which will make even the most uncaring sit up and take notice.

For instance, take the firecracker industry. Fifty per cent of the labour force is made up of children—from 3½ to 15! And they work for more than 12 hours a day, under the most inhuman conditions for a mere rupee or two. Imagine a child losing half a day's wages for simply speaking to another child! Handling highly dangerous and combustible chemicals is part of the day's work for these children who have no time to play or study. And yet, we blow up thousands of rupees worth of crackers during festivals like Diwali and New Year. It will surely serve as an eye-opener to the present-day youth.

Or, take the case of municipal workers who clear the drains, collect the garbage and remove the carcasses of dead animals, among other equally nauseating work. There is an account by Pandu Rao Bhanji Kamble, a 14-year-old boy who along with others about his age, cleans small sewers into which an adult cannot enter. "The scavenging has to be done at a bent posture and we work neck deep in the gutter. When we come out, our bodies are covered with filth, but there is no provision to wash it off. All I can say is that once inside (a gutter) the child looks like a rat in the gutter and in my experience, feels like one." What

a horrible picture!

Each chapter carries a first-person account like this to jolt the reader. (All the stories are not full of despair. Read 'Rajinder's Story' at the end of the review.) But that is not only what the book does. It also encourages the reader to experience the working condition himself or herself to get the actual feel for it. For example, the chapter 'Municipal Workers', has an activity, whereby, the reader is asked to clean the kitchen drain of her house using her bare hands.

The questions at the end are interesting. How many of you were able to complete the entire operation? Why did people give up in between? What did you do after completing the job? I am sure, after going through the 'experiment', no reader will look at the municipal worker with contempt, only admiration. Other chapters have similar assignments and activities that are bound to change the attitude of the student-reader towards the workers. In the chapter on 'Construction Work,' an assignment asks the reader to imagine that he is a construction worker who has just constructed a farmhouse to serve as the **playhouse** for the 7 and 10-year-old sons of a rich man. It goes on to ask the reader to write the feelings of the construction

worker. Such exercises are sure to provoke positive reactions in children's minds.

In fact, they are not only thought provoking, but also creative. There are assignments which ask the reader to make posters, bookmarks and write dramatic screenplays. Others detail procedures for making liquid soap at home, use environment-friendly pesticides and teach how to make compost pits to convert garbage into useful manure. Readers are asked to suggest ways to make the workplace more user-friendly, design a chair for the office worker etc., which are sure to bring out the creative talents of the readers. Useful information and amazing facts are given to add interest to a serious subject. Evocative photographs and cartoons, not to speak of scientific diagrams add to the value of the book.

The book is a useful tool of participatory learning and in the hands of a capable and dedicated teacher, can serve as an exceptional educative and creative learning experience. The authors, though, could have avoided being too strident and preachy at places, and instead kept the tone strictly educational. A must for every school library and every home too.

Thangamani

RAJINDER'S STORY

I am sixteen today, and have seen drastic diversities in my life.

I come from a poor and large family of nine members. Ever since I can remember, my parents have been working hard to earn bread for us, as labourers on construction sites or daily wage earners in the corn fields.

We are from the state of Maharashtra, where we never lived at a permanent place, but kept shifting in search of work. When I was about six, we left Maharashtra and came to Delhi.

When we came to the capital, I never imagined going to school. Coming from Maharashtra, my own language was Marathi. I didn't know how to speak Hindi, and that was a problem. And my father could not even afford to feed the family, sometimes we had to ask where the next meal was coming from. So the question of going to school was put aside for a time.

This depressed my father, who had wanted to get us educated since he was illiterate.

But after two years I learned Hindi, and got admission to a government school. The school was very serious, and most people came from comparatively poor families like mine.

Then I was taken into Springdales Public School under their gifted children scheme, because I had caught up and was doing well at the government school.

It was the beginning of a new life. I felt inferior at first, because the people at Springdales were of

higher status, and I often felt they belong to a much higher level of society, of which I could never be a part.

But slowly I managed to get over these ideas. Today I have many good friends, in Springdales and outside. I don't consider myself inferior to anybody now.

All teaching at Springdales is in English. When I went there, I didn't even know the letters of the English alphabet. I worked sincerely for two years, and can now communicate well.

I am still at Springdales and happy there. My family is still moving about in search of work, but is now much happier. We can afford our three meals a day at the moment.

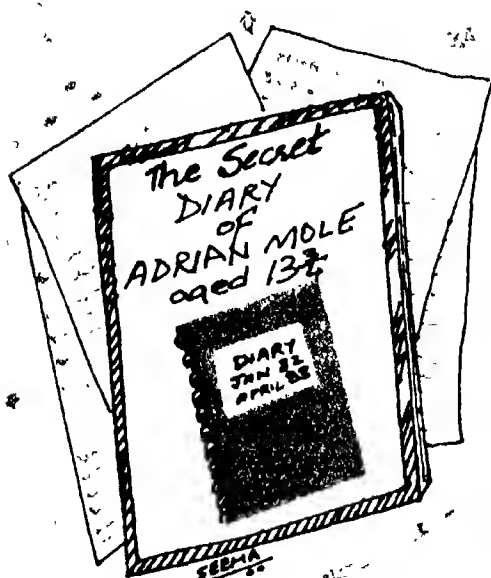
After school I go home, to a small single roomed hut, near the construction site where my parents work. I share this one room with the other eight members of my family.

I have never had an electric bulb glowing in my house. I have got used to studying under the street lights, or with a kerosene lamp.

I face a different life at school from my life at home. In school I am with people who are totally different from my family in culture, language and social position. But I never find difficulty in coping with these two worlds. In fact, I enjoy playing the two roles, like in a play.

Reader's Choice

NOT
Secret
anymore



By Reader of the
month: Bhavana Nair
Illustrations: Seema

HE is a teenager. He worries about the spots on his face. He is a budding writer, brilliant, yet undiscovered. He is interested in the new girl in his class. He thinks he "might fall in love with her" because "it is time I fell in love, after all I am 13 3/4 years old". That is what Adrian Mole notes

in his secret diary.

Adrian Mole is Sue Townsend's hero of *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 3/4*. Sue Townsend's obvious understanding of the seesawing of emotions in the transitional years between childhood and adulthood make Adrian's secret notings strike an instant chord of empathy in the readers of this book.

The book opens with Adrian's New Year resolutions, "... I will help the blind across the road... I will hang my trousers up... I will not start smoking... I will help the poor and ignorant..." Very noble, like all New Year resolutions.

January I also sees him worrying about a spot on his face which, he is sure, is due to his mother's lack of knowledge about vitamins. When he tells her so, his mother asks him to "Go and buy an orange, then."

Adrian Mole is an intellectual teenager. He says, "I saw Malcolm Muggeridge on the television... and I understood nearly every word..." And a little later, "I have written to Malcolm Muggeridge, c/o the BBC, asking him what to do about being an intellectual. I hope he writes back

soon because I am getting fed up being one on my own..."

Sue Townsend's hero is also rather irreverent about his parents. He writes, "I felt rotten today. It is my mother's fault... Just my luck to have a mother like her. There is a chance my parents could be alcoholics. Next year I could be in a children's home..."

A few days later Adrian notes, "My father has got the flu. I am not surprised with the diet we get... My father is still lazing about in bed. He is supposed to be ill, but I noticed he is still smoking... I found a word in my dictionary that describes my father. It is *malingeringer*..."

His opinion of his mother's intelligence and capabilities is not too high either. "My mother is looking for a job... I think my mother is being very selfish. She won't be any good in a job anyway. She isn't very bright..."

The spot on his face becomes almost an obsession with Adrian. "My spot or boil has reached its peak. Surely it can't get any bigger... (My grandma) squeezed the spot on my chin. It has made it worse... I will go to the doctor's on Saturday if the spot is still

BUO SPOT

there. I can't live like this with everybody staring... I have made an appointment about the spot. It has turned purple... (Mr. Taylor) didn't examine the spot, he just said I mustn't worry and was everything all right at home. I told him about my bad home life and my poor diet, but he said I was well nourished and to go home and count my blessings..."

Adrian's best friend is a boy called Nigel. "Nigel came round today. He has got a tan from his Christmas holiday. I think Nigel will be ill soon from the shock of the cold in England... He hasn't got a single spot yet." He has little sympathy to waste on his friend when, at a disco, "Nigel was showing off... He ended up putting a safety pin through his ear. My father had to take him to the hospital in our car. Nigel's parents haven't got a car because his father's got a steel plate in his head and his mother is only four feet eleven inches tall. It's not surprising Nigel has turned out bad really, with a maniac and a midget for parents."

Adrian as a lovestruck teenager is no different from any other in the same state. "... Pandora

has got hair the colour of treacle, and it's long like girls' hair should be. She has got quite a good figure... I am going to bed early to think about Pandora... it was Geography today so I sat next to Pandora for a whole hour. She looks better every day... I lent Pandora my blue felt-tip pen... I think she appreciates these small attentions..."

"Pandora smiled at me in school dinner today, but I was choking on a piece of gristle so I couldn't smile back. Just my luck."

One of Adrian's poetic outpourings is as follows.

*"The trees are stark
naked.*

*Their autumnal clothes
Litter the pavements.*

*Council sweepers apply
fire*

*Thus creating municipal
pyres.*

I, Adrian Mole,

Kick them

*And burn my Hush
Puppies."*

This poem he sends to the BBC.

His efforts do elicit a response from the BBC, "... Our Poetry Department is inundated with Autumnal poems. The smell of bonfires and the crackling of leaves pervade the very corridors. Good try but try again, eh?"

Adrian's reactions?

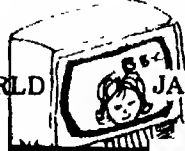
"Try again? He is almost giving me a commission..." He replies to the BBC asking, "How much will I get if you broadcast one of my poems on the radio? When do you want me to send it? What do you want it to be about? Can I read it out myself? Will you pay my train fare in advance? What time will it go out on the airways? I have to be in bed by ten..."

As the year ends, Adrian notes, "The last day of the year! A lot has happened. I have fallen in love... Gone Intellectual. And had two letters from the BBC. Not bad going for a 14¾ year old!"

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13¾ has you laughing and also swallowing that sudden lump in your throat as you come to know Adrian's fears and moments of pleasure, his efforts to take charge of himself, understand himself, forge an identity for himself and grow up, physically and mentally.

You can read Adrian's further exploits, continued in the same vein, in *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*.

Any good library or a well-stocked bookshop would provide you with copies of these books



Smallest, largest, tallest...

Browse a Bit

IT so happens that many a time, we only know facts like the longest river is the Nile and the smallest bird is the humming-bird and so on, but know no more details about them. A little more information would make them more interesting and perhaps help us remember the facts better. In this column, that is precisely what you are going to get—the names of the smallest, largest, highest, deepest, etc. etc., and some information about them. We start with the largest libraries.

How would you like to get lost in a place that has about 20 million books? Sounds great doesn't it? There is more: this fantastic place also has 35 million manuscripts and 5600 books printed before 1501, which includes a perfect copy of the Bible printed by Guttenberg. With a collection of 84 million items in the form of books, manuscripts, maps, charts, engravings, graphs, recordings, films, photographs and musical compositions, **THE LIBRARY of CONGRESS** in Washington D.C. is the largest library in the world.

The Library of Congress was established in 1800, chiefly for the research work of the members of the Congress. Today it is visited by scholars and research

workers from all over the world. Over the decades it has grown in size and today is housed in three buildings spread over an area of 29 hectares! That is some size, isn't it?

Did you know that the first library is over 5000 years old? In fact, ever since man discovered writing, libraries have existed in some form. The ancient Mesopotamians found out that by making marks on wet clay and then drying and baking them, they could preserve records, and so started the libraries of the ancient world. Down the centuries, clay tablets, papyrus, leather and then paper were used to record the written word. Today electronic gadgets like floppy disks, microfilms and other such devices are used by libraries the world over. Some tidbits about libraries:

* The oldest library existed in Nippur in Sumeria in 3000 B.C. Archaeologists unearthed the library consisting of 30,000 clay tablets. Similar libraries have also been found in Turkey and Syria.

* Ever wonder what the **DEAD SEA SCROLLS** were? These were a collection of hundreds of manuscripts written on animal skins that were discovered in the caves near the Dead Sea. Since

they consisted mostly of leather scrolls, they got that name.

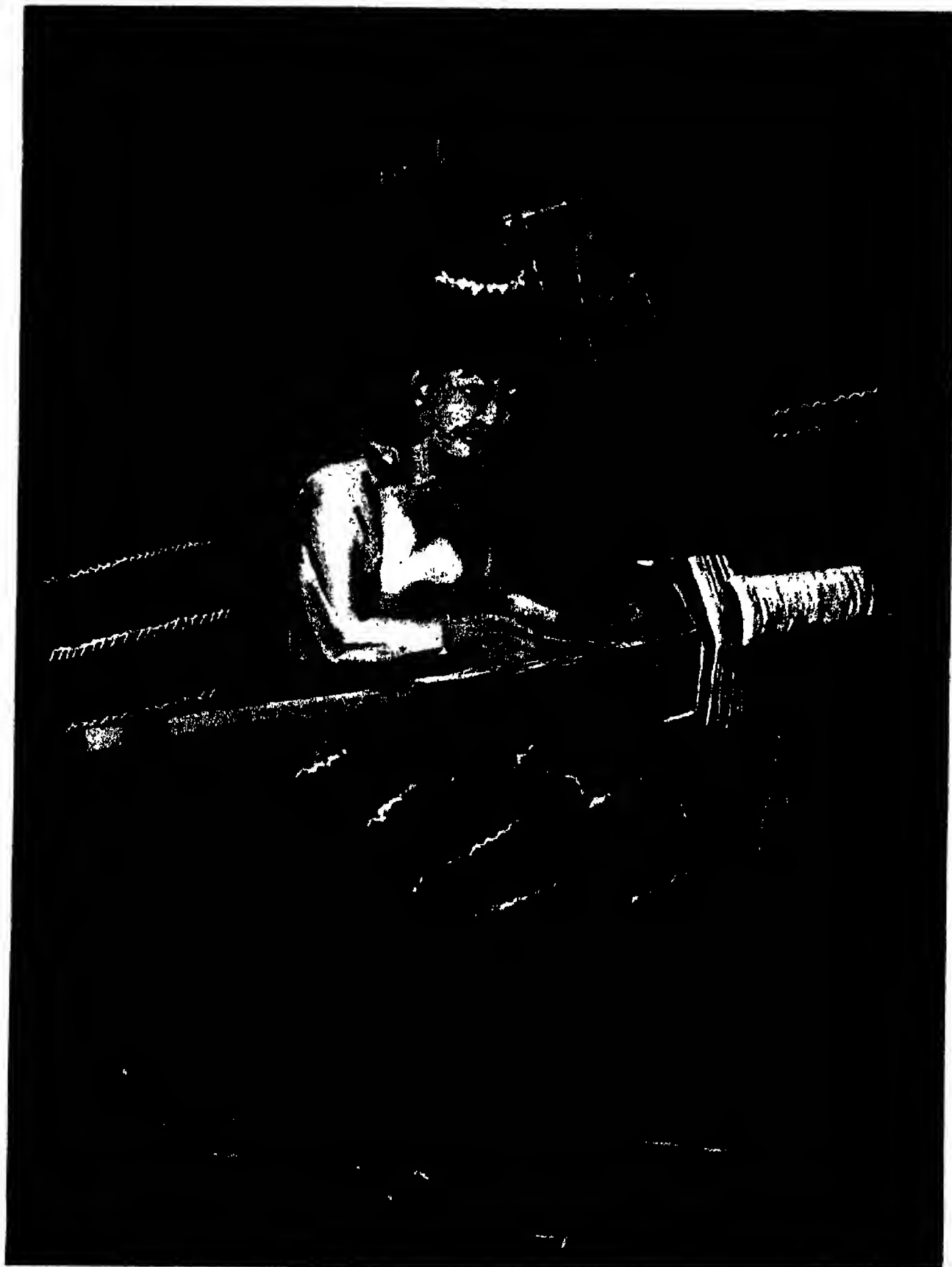
* Ancient Egyptians used papyrus scrolls to write. In spite of their perishability, some scrolls have survived. The oldest ones date back to 2700 B.C. One of them, the Harris Papyrus 1, is the longest known, being 41 metres long. It is kept in the British Library.

* Coming to India, the Buddhists and Jains established the early libraries with a collection of manuscripts on palm leaves in their monasteries. Among the modern libraries, the University libraries of Allahabad, Bombay, Varanasi, Delhi, Madras and Calcutta are the oldest. The Delhi Public Library with its collection of 6,30,000 volumes is the largest in India and ranks among the largest in South and South-east Asia.

* The erstwhile Soviet Union had the largest number of libraries 3,30,000 - in the world. The Lenin State Library in Moscow ranks among the largest libraries in the world, with 28 million items.

* Harvard University Library in the U.S. is the largest university library in the world with a collection of 10 million volumes.

Compiled by Thangamani



Mg Thu Kha (14)
Myanmar
The weaving sound

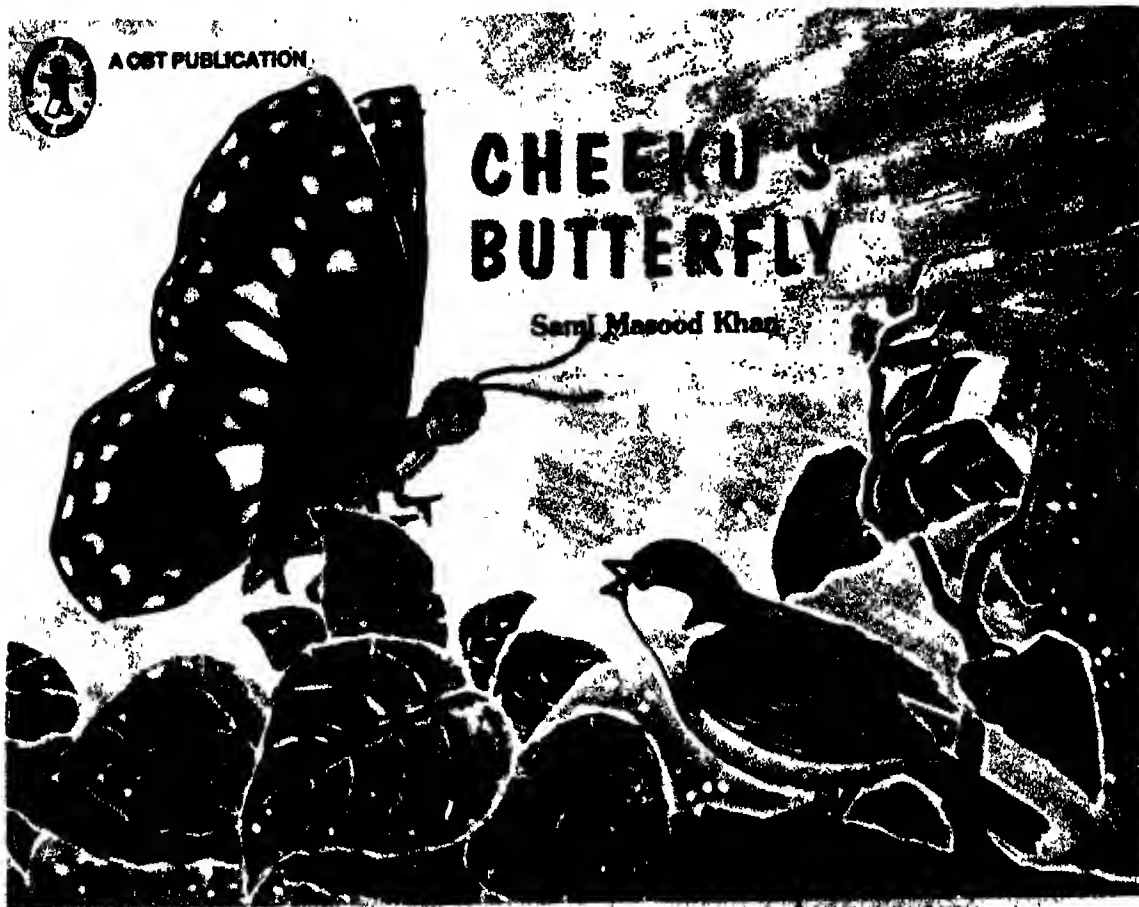
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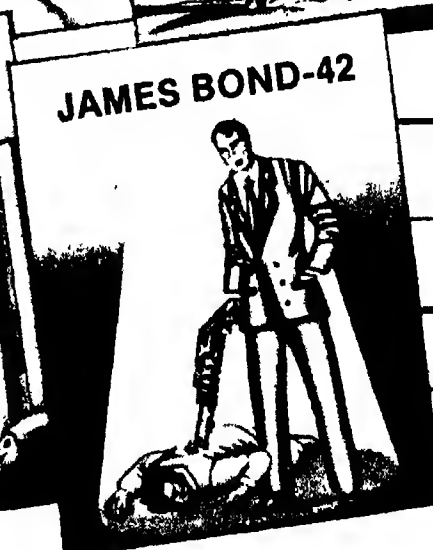
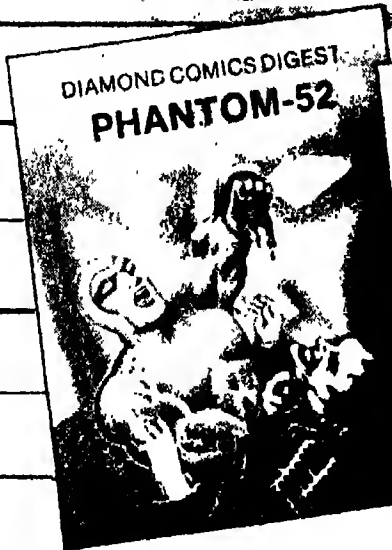
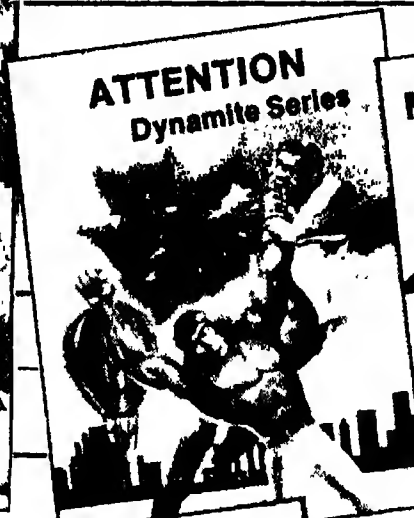
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FEBRUARY 1996
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No. 11

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PEN-FRIENDS



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...Dear Editor,

I was greatly affected by your letter in the December edition of *Children's World*. It was for the first time that I realised how many children of the present generation have experienced the cheerful joys of life. How many of them have that tiny kaleidoscope of pleasant memories inside them to save for their old age? Only a handful of fortunate children would enjoy Christmas this year and there are far less for whom New Year would bring bright new sunshine. Will the children of Rwanda or Burundi, countries ravaged by genocidal warfare, ever experience feelings of

"The silence was so eloquent! I had never thought silence could be so startling," said our colleague wide-eyed with wonder, after she came back from the performance by Astad Deboo and his troupe of hearing-impaired dancers. The item came after a series of foot-stomping musical-dance numbers and so the impact of figures dancing to no musical accompaniment seems to have shattered the audience with its silence...

It's February already and everybody goes about their business as though the New Year is dusty and old! "Why not," You come to the sudden realisation. Newness is not just changing a date on the calendar but learning, and learning

felicity and kindness? Can the children of Uganda ever forgive, when the roadside vegetable stands of their country bear bones of their families, slaughtered to death? Can that little boy in Yugoslavia who weeps near his dead mother, who was clubbed to death, ever be the same carefree child again? Or the children of Somalia, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Karachi or nearer home, of Kashmir, ever grow up as normal human beings, with a happy childhood, when they are in the grip of an unseen killer? Can that young girl who was born in a refugee camp and who still lives there, ever know what it means to be at

of, new things. Opening your mind's eye to a dimension beyond the one you live in, in your familiar world. Sometimes new things can be discovered in the old too, you realise. Take the presence of a fire-engine in the Railway Museum. What is a vintage fire-engine doing there, you wonder, apart from running races and winning prizes? And the Rail Museum itself... In this day and age of simulated space-rides, it's like a dream-come-true to hurtle along the miniature rail-track in their 'mini' train. Would be ideal for a day out from studies after the exams next month.

To go a dimension farther from a joy-ride-train into the past would be to travel the time-

home, to go to school, to play, to sit in the sunshine and read *Children's World*?

The people who are killing today, the rebels, the militants, the soldiers, at one time had a choice between war and peace. They chose war!

But perhaps the children of today, the children of the whole world can make a better choice. A choice called peace so that one day we can all celebrate a new year, a peaceful new year, where there are no man made tragedies, just the cheer and warmth of peace.

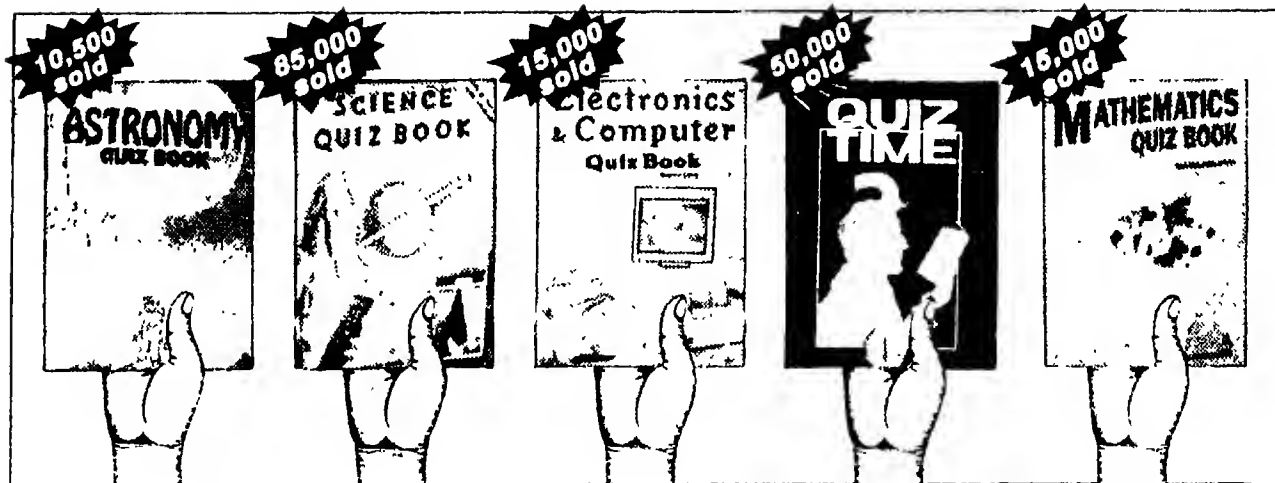
With a silent prayer for a better world,

Mili Bhardwaj (15),
Pinjore

machine into 'Toyland'—that reveals the fascinating toys children had way back in the period we refer to as the Indus Valley Civilization. A time of terracotta toy-carts and animal look-alikes that potters imitate to this day! Which brings us back to the present dimension! As your eyes run over these pages you realise your mind has opened up to yet another dimension! That *Children's World* or any other magazine or book for that matter opens up your mind's eye to several dimensions all at once...

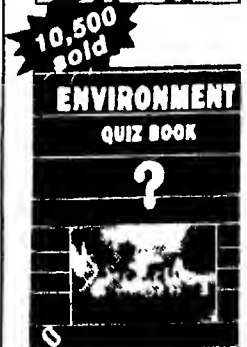
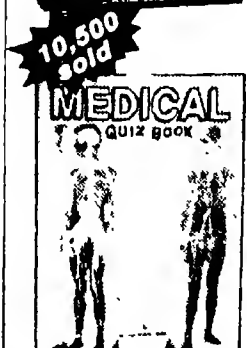
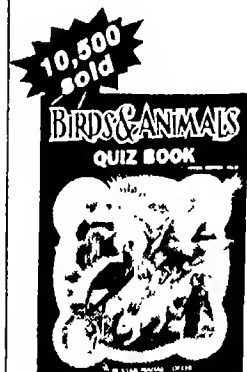
Happy reading and time-travelling till next time,

Editor



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Text : Meena Bhandari
Photographs courtesy:
Rail Museum

ONCE UPON a time there was a Nizam who was so rich that his State Railway workshop, known by the name of Lallaguda Workshop, owned an 80 hp Fire-Engine built in 1914 by John Morris and Sons, UK. The fascinating thing about this engine was that it had solid tyres, a turbine type water pump and one Exhaust Ejector type of priming device. The normal speed of this engine was 25 kmph and in peak form it could even reach 60 kmph.

Today this engine is owned by the Rail Transport Museum, which is located at Chankayapuri, New Delhi. In fact this is the only vehicle of its type left in the world, fitted with original Shrewsbury and Challiner solid tyres. It has won many awards like Restoration trophy in 1981, 7 o'Clock trophy in 1988, PP Balrampur trophy in 1983, 1985 and 1994 and Statesman Challenge trophy in 1995.

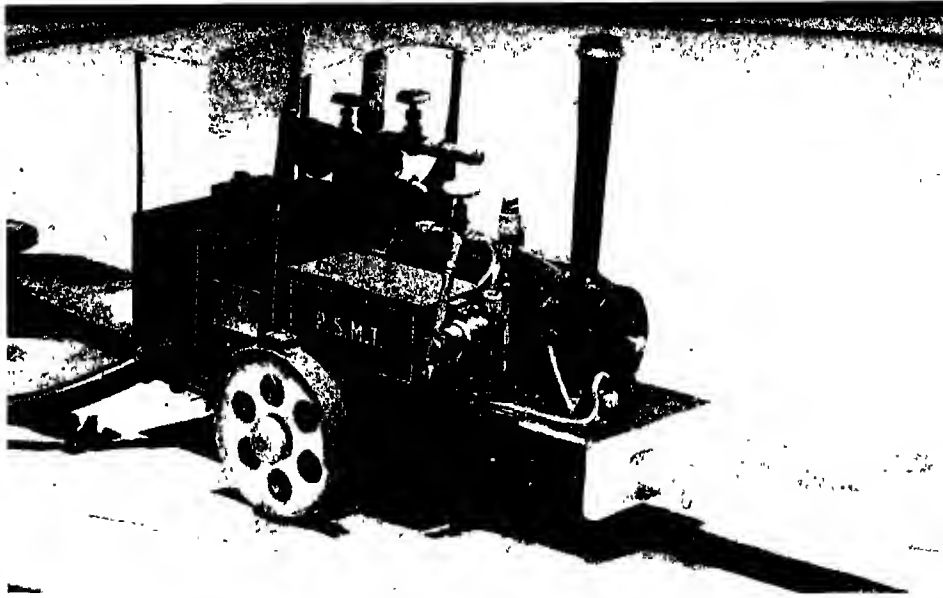
In the olden days it was used for extinguishing fire and when it moved from one corner of the city to another, people could hear the hand bell. Believe it or not, it could deliver 500

gallons of water per minute with its Ajax pump. With the passage of time many new fire fighting devices have come and the Old Fire-Engine only

participates in the annual Statesman Vintage Car Rally held in Delhi every winter and unfailingly bags a trophy.

The route of this rally is

A VINTAGE FIRE- ENGINE AT THE RAIL MUSEUM...



Morris Fire Engine (B-1914)

Winner of Statesman Vintage Challenge Trophy 1995

not very long in comparison to international rallies but is certainly tremendous for the vintage cars. The rally starts from *The Statesman* building in Connaught Place, goes upto Sohna and finishes at the National Stadium. About 70 cars of yester-years participate in it; many fail to reach the goal as they break down on the way. Only the Fire Engine manages to finish the rally. There are six people who sit in it. Of these, three or four dress up as firemen.

Before participating in the race, a team of people give the Fire-Engine a thorough servicing in the premises of the Museum. That is the only time the engine gets a servicing. At other times it is kept inside a glass room for the general viewing of the public.

You must be wondering why the Fire-Engine is being given the status of a car. The reason is simple. The fire-engines of modern times, you will notice, are huge in size. This old fire-engine, on the other hand, is no bigger than a modern car. Hence it can easily pass for one. Many owners of vintage cars are not happy with its inclusion in the rally but there is little that they can do to have it excluded.

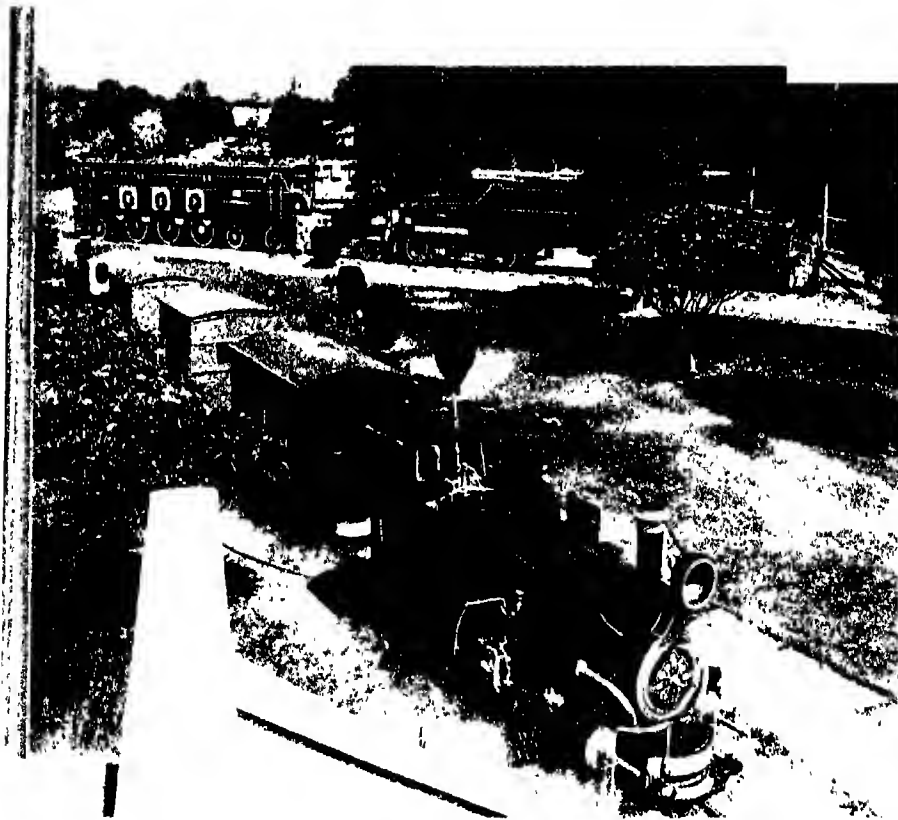
The Rail Museum not only has the Fire-Engine, but many other exhibits besides a beautiful museum, which depicts the history of the advent of the railways in India. The idea for the Museum was mooted way back in 1962 and, in 1968, the Ministry of Railways decided that the proposed museum should be a full-fledged transport museum as in

other advanced countries. The Rail Museum was inaugurated on February 1, 1977, with the aim of covering the history of rail, roadways, airways, waterways and communications in India.

Spread over an area of 10 acres, it comprises of an elegantly designed octagonal building, which has six display galleries and a large open area with coaches standing on the tracks.

Inside the Museum one can see various small exhibits, working and dummy models, coat-of-arms, records, historical documents, photographs and charts depicting the development and growth of railways in India. Indeed one gallery has been set apart to focus attention on the post-Independence developments and modernisation of the Indian Railways.

Outside in the open field, there are as many as six gauges, four of them accommodated on only four rails. With lines of various gauges connected with multi-gauge lines to facilitate movement, the open yard houses some of the most exquisite specimens of railway engines and coaches. The Museum yard has a rich collection



'B' Class N G Steam locomotive of Darjeeling

of 69 vintage locos, carriages and saloons. At many places locomotives have been stationed with contemporary carriages to provide a better perspective. For example, one can see 'The Fairy Queen' which is 126 years old. Then you have the Patiala State Monorail train. It is called monorail as the track laid for it was a single rail alongside the road. The Prince of Wales Saloon built in 1875 for the use of the Prince of Wales during his visit to India for the 1876 Durbar, too finds a place beside the Saloons of the Maharaja of Mysore and Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda.

On November 14, 1994, a miniature steam locomotive, a working scale model of Marshall-M Class Steam Locomotive was inaugurated at the Museum. A whistle section comprising the whistles of steam, diesel and electric locomotives has also been commissioned. Children can now actually operate the whistles of these locomotives and hear the real sound made by locomotives on the move.

Children can also work a token-operated train system by themselves and sit inside the models of steam locomotive and bus. The biggest attraction of the Museum is a toy train

which goes round the Museum and gives the visitor a complete round of the premises.

The Museum celebrates February 1 as 'Museum Day'. On this day some activity is organised for handicapped children. And, as an annual feature, the Museum has started organising an 'On-the-Spot Drawing and Painting Competition' on rail themes.

So the next time you plan an excursion, go with a group of your friends and spend one day at the Rail Museum.



*Entertainment too!
During the Rail Bal Mela*

Essays of Excellence

A report by VST

THE PRIZES for the third All India Essay Competition, organised annually by Delhi Public School, R.K. Puram, New Delhi and sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, were given away to the winners on December 22, 1995. Smt. Sukhbans Kaur, Minister of State for Tourism, who gave away the prizes expressed her satisfaction that children all over India were so intensely involved in discovering India, and her tourist potential, when they participated in this competition. She also inspired the prize-winners to look for careers in tourism—an area slated to be India's most promising, exciting and lucrative industry.

The topic for the 1993-94 essay competition, (for which the prizes were given away that evening) was "When a traveller arrives in India"—foreigner, tourist, globe-trotter—he enters into a fascinating, vibrant world of the past, the present and the future."

Participants had the choice of expressing their views in Hindi, English or any of the regional languages. The initial elimination rounds are held in the State. The best of the best, from every State, then assemble in Delhi, to compete on an all-India basis. Experts from the Sahitya Akademi assist the organisers in selecting the best regional language essays.

There were 13 prize-

winners in the 93-94 essay competition in languages like Sanskrit, English, Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam, Assamese, Tamil, Hindi and Urdu. The first prize-winner was Hidam Ibohanbi Singh for his essay in Manipuri. Two second prizes were awarded to P. Kanaka Durga for her Telugu essay and Vishav Chetna for her Punjabi essay. The third prize went to S. Sandhya for her essay in Kannada.

In keeping with the spirit of oneness that distinguishes India, in spite of its diversity—the hosts, Delhi Public School had an evening of song, dance and Christmas carols to entertain the prize-winners. A lively programme that represented almost all Indian States.



Zooming into the Past

Text : O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

FASTEN YOUR seat belts, please. The Time Machine is ready to go—into the past.

As the minutes pass, we go back into the centuries. The machine stops about 5,000 years ago, in a city which we now call Mohenjo-daro.

It stands by the river Indus in what is now Pakistan's province of Sind. What was a semi-desert as we know it now, looks a green and fertile plain.

We are in a place from where we can see much of the city. But nobody can see us. Let us take a quiet look around without anyone suspecting or questioning us.

Mohenjo-daro is a busy, brick-built city. There is much to see. But we are only interested in toys. Luckily there are plenty of

those. All of them, even the rattles, are made of clay—baked clay.

Though iron is unheard of here yet, copper and bronze are in use. These metals are used for making tools and weapons and artefacts.

Not all that look like toys are playthings. Some are for decoration. Some others are for use in religious rites. Isn't it so with the toys we have at Diwali and other festivals?

Look at that clay country cart. It has solid wheels and two bullocks to draw it. It seems that carts like this bring farm produce here from the rural areas.

There are toys shaped like the bull, cow, sheep and pig. A Mohenjo-daro animal familiar to us because of its pictures in history books is the humped bull.

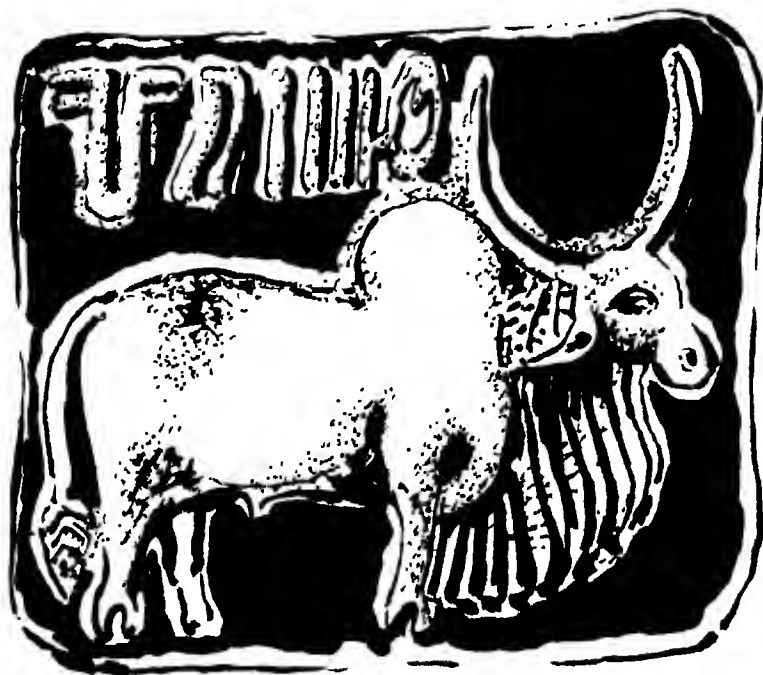
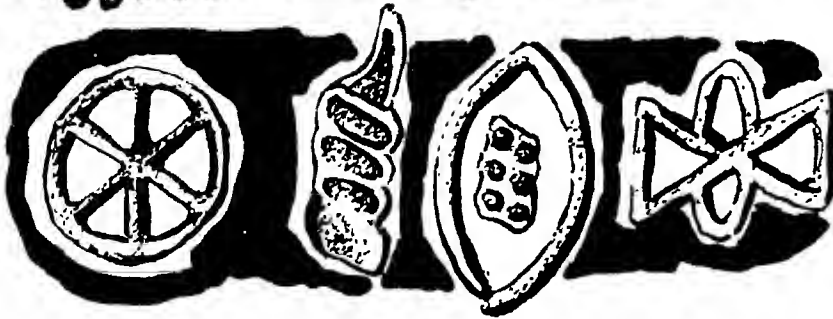
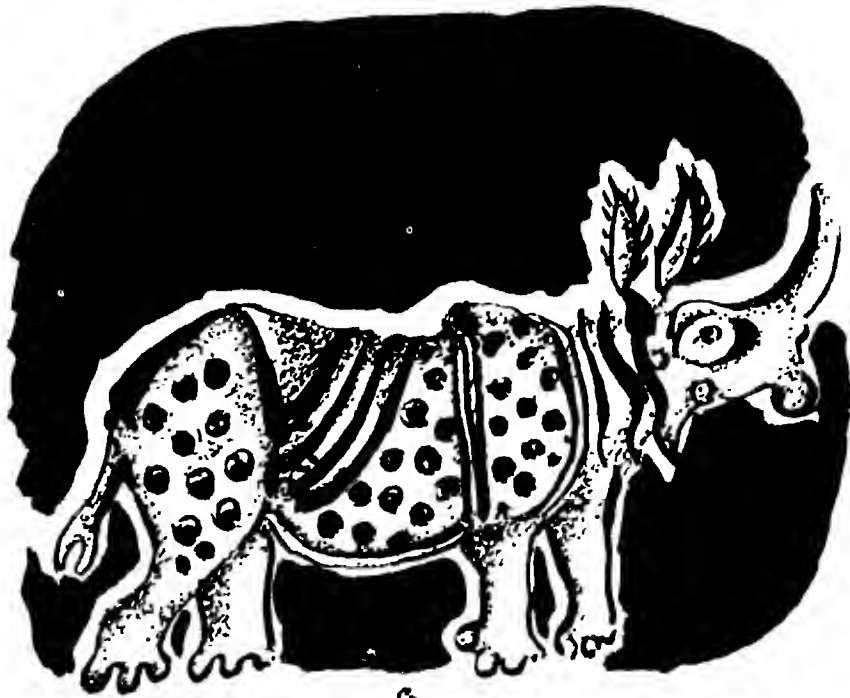
There is a nodding bull too. A piece of string makes its loose head nod. This is akin to our mechanical toys.

Then there is a wheeled bird. A bird with wheels sounds strange. But pulling or pushing it is one way of making it move.

Another toy, a whistle, is shaped like a bird. It is a hollow clay bird with a mouthpiece at one end. As you blow into it, the air escapes from another hole with a whistling sound.

Toys are small models of the things and creatures we see around us. In other words, the Mohenjo-daro toys tell us, as they tell its children, of the birds and animals found there.

One of the toys resembles a rhino. The rhino is not found in or near Sind. It is an animal



of far-off (present-day) Assam. However, it is quite possible that the rhino merrily roams the Sind jungles. Both the trees and the animal vanished later.

We know of a similar case—of the lion. Now it is found only in the Gir forest of Gujarat. But from stories and sculptures we learn that it was once found in many parts of India.

All this also indicates that toys are not mere playthings. They teach and inform us in their own way. They tell of the people who made them and their way of life.

Some of the Mohenjo-daro toys are well-crafted, some others are crude. The former were obviously made by skilled hands. The others are the handiwork of less skilled men or women.

Just as Mohenjo-daro has many toys, so have the other towns in the Indus valley. Toymaking, it seems, is a paying business here. You can even say that Mohenjo-daro is a toy centre.

The Mohenjo-daro toy tradition goes on in India. Though toyshops may be full of teddies, Barbie dolls, mechanical playthings, space age novelties

and games, in the streets and at *melas* we see many clay toys like the toys here. Our village and small town toymakers still make wooden, wheeled birds and animals and clay bird whistles.

Export and foreign travel are two of the many words we use daily. So do the Mohenjo-daro people, though not so commonly.

They have contacts with the people of other lands for example, the

people of what we call Egypt today. A few adventurous men come here from there, and a few travel there from here.

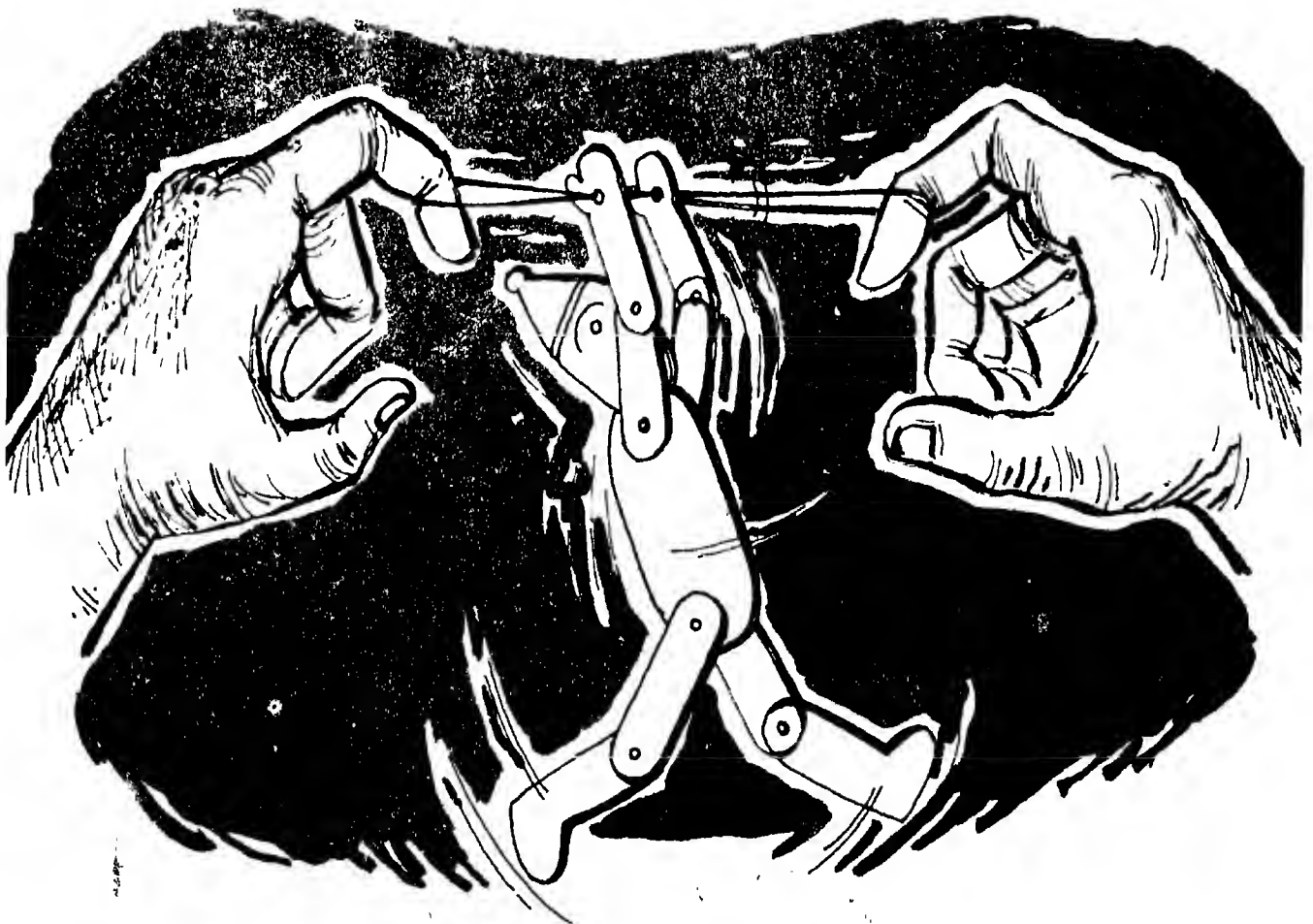
Travelling is slow and not so easy. Those who dare, follow the long, long coastline on foot or by cart or on camelback. The horse has not come to this part of the world yet. Or they sail the seas in boats and small ships, keeping close to the shore.

Some of Mohenjo-daro

products are in demand there as also in Babylon. Among these may be toys. The travellers may even take a sample or two as gifts or for their novelty.

Anyway, Egypt has lots of its own toys. These are made of clay or wood. Dolls and jumping jacks are a common sight.

A jumping jack is a man with jointed limbs that can be moved by pulling attached strings. We have such toys to this day.



Egyptian children play with toy cats and crocodiles which, because of a string attached, have movable jaws. They also have toys which are models of the juggler, milkman and washerman. Such toys are buried with the dead.

We too have toy jugglers, fishwives and snake-charmers on sale at fairs and in bazaars all over India.

There is some time before our return journey begins. Let us try to know a little more about the toys elsewhere.

North of Egypt, in the Mediterranean Sea, is the island of Crete. Though small, it is a highly civilised world in itself. Minotaur of the Greek myths lived there.

The Cretans make beautiful things. Naturally, their toys are also beautiful.

Not far from there is the land of Greeks. They have their own variety of toys. We also see toys painted on their urns and vases. Or they are referred to in their writings.

Greek kids float little boats in pools of water. They play with tops, hoops and swings. The kite is also made there, though it is not necessarily flown for fun.

The Greek epics tell of wars and heroes. The warriors ride horses. Children have toy horse-riders.

The girls play "house" with dolls. In fact, they play with dolls until they get married. Just before the wedding the bride-to-be leaves a doll at the altar of Artemis, a virgin goddess.

To the west of Greece is Rome. The Roman empire spreads on either side of Italy. In the west it covers Britain. In the east it stretches up to where Solomon once ruled.

Wherever they go, the Romans take their toys with them. As they are conquerors, among the toys their children have are toy soldiers.

Roman girls play with dolls. They have doll's furniture too. Like girls in Greece, Roman girls too leave their dolls at the altar of Diana before they get married.

From Rome we go to Greece again. And from there to the land of the Bible. To its east lies Babylon, where civilisation began at almost the same time as in Egypt.

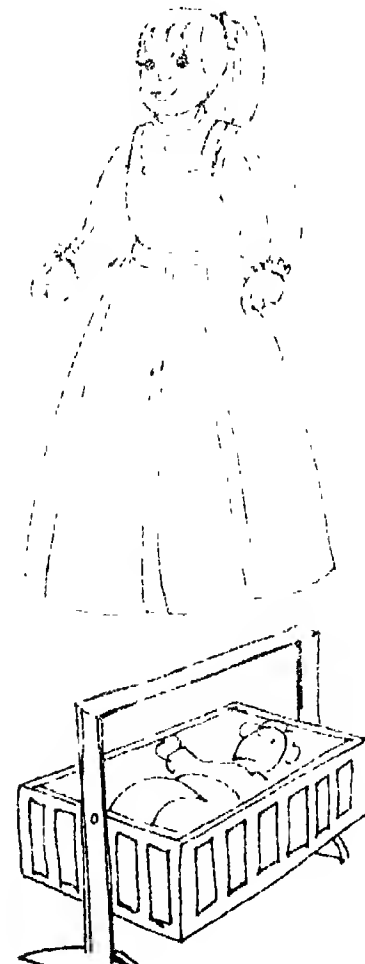
There are many flourishing cities in the region. Many cute and curious things are made or

brought there. Among them are the children's toys.

Further east is the empire of Iran. Then China. And India. With that we come back to Mohenjo-daro.

Though all these civilisations are old, not all began at the same time. Centuries separate their beginnings.

But they do have some kind of contact with one another. They have trade and also exchange of stories and ideas. That is how Indian tales are found in Greece and the Arab world.



Novel Statue of Bapu

Text: T.S. Sudhir

Illustration: Deepak Harichandan

IT COULD be just another statue of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, or Bapu. But this particular statue of Bapu has been creating waves at the Exhibition Grounds in Hyderabad for over two months now.

This Mahatma stands by a toy train clutching a Bible and gazing peacefully, unmoved by the cacophony around him. Even as the eateries nearby do brisk business, passers-by stop to throw a casual glance at the statue only to end up staring curiously. A placard placed close to the statue announces that it is a poor artiste. The statue is not a statue after all!

This Mahatma look-alike is Sainam Raju from the Madurai district of Tamil Nadu. Everyday, this diminutive 40-year-old dresses up as Mahatma Gandhi and

stands for over five hours at a stretch as a statue, to earn his living.

Transforming into the Mahatma is a half-an-hour job for Raju. The face is first coloured with silver paint followed by the hands and legs. The silver paint helps give the statue

effect. The chest and the back are spared as he covers his body with a white shawl. A pair of typical Gandhi spectacles and walking stick complete the picture of the most famous son of India. After this, for the next five hours or so, a pedestal



near the entrance to the exhibition is his abode.

No amount of coaxing, cajoling, joking or even ridiculing can move Raju to give up his motionless posture. The only thing that gives away his statue-act is the placard which says, "I AM A POOR ARTISTE. PLEASE HELP ME."

The idea to transform into Gandhi was born many years ago when, as a schoolboy, Raju, once dressed up as the Mahatma. Later, when getting a job proved difficult, he fell back on this role to support himself and his family.

Says Raju, "Earlier, I used refined flour for the statue effect. But these days I use silver paint." The paint has to be scrubbed off with kerosene oil every night and even though it is a painstaking process, Raju does not seem to mind.

Raju travels with the Exhibition Society all over Andhra Pradesh as a part of the troupe. His posing as a statue till midnight everyday, when the fair draws to a close, fetches him Rs.2,000 every month. On Sundays and other public holidays, he stands upto eight hours.

Doing it routinely for over five years now, Raju does not feel the strain so much though he occasionally does need a hot bath and some balm to relieve the ache in his legs.

Raju's wife, Lakshmi, is very proud of his work. Their two children study in their native village, reading of the life and work of the real Mahatma in their history classes.

Ironically, Raju does not know much about Gandhi. "I haven't been able to get any book on Gandhiji," he says, though he is very sure he is playing the part of a man definitely worth emulating.



Dear Children

VISIT

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The place that is Educative, Informative & Entertaining

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Smallest, largest, tallest.



Trains are the most common means of transport in India, both for passengers as well as for freight. We are used to seeing trains that chug

along at a leisurely pace and it can be maddening when it happens to be a passenger train and one in which you are travelling,

right? How many times have you wished that you could make it go faster, even faster? Even the so-called superfast trains in

our country are hardly either super or fast compared to the fastest in the world. Would you like to know which the fastest train in the world is?

The **TGV (Train a Grande Vitesse)** of France is the fastest passenger train in the world, with an average speed of 300 kms per hour. At its fastest, it can travel upto 330 kms per hour, which it does between Paris and cities in Western France.

What a great leap, from the time that George Stephenson drove his 'Locomotion' powered by a steam-engine at 24 km per hour in 1825. That was the first public railway, incidentally. Today, steam engines have virtually disappeared from the scene, except in developing countries. In India, diesel and electricity have replaced the steam-powered engines and now steam locomotives are rarely, if ever, used.

Here are some tidbits for your fact file:

- * The very first successful steam locomotive was built by Richard Trevithick of England in 1804.

- * The fastest steam locomotive was the Mallard of England, which set a speed record of 203 kms

per hour in 1938.

- * The world's longest railway line is the Trans Siberian Railway, in the erstwhile Soviet Union (CIS). It extends from Moscow to Vladivostok, a distance of 9010 kms.

- * Laid end to end, the tracks of all the railway routes in the world, would stretch to more than 1,207,000 kms, which is $3\frac{1}{4}$ times the distance from the earth to the moon!

- * The highest railway tracks in the world are in Peru and Bolivia. They rise to almost 6000 metres above sea level.

- * The world's longest stretch of straight track—478 kms—lies in the middle of Nullarbor Plain in Australia.

- * The fastest train in India is the **Shatabdi Express** that has an average speed of 120 kms. per hour.

- * Double-decker trains ply between Bombay and Surat (Flying Ranees) and Bombay and Pune (Deccan Queen).

- * Indian Railways is the fourth largest in the world, with a rail route of over 60,000 kms.

- * The 'Toy Train' (0.610 metre gauge) to Darjeeling is a vintage train with its steam locomotive, which passes

back and forth over roads at several places.

- * Ootacamund (Ooty), in Tamil Nadu, has the unique 'rack railway system' where steam-engines push trains up rack sections (the racks are serrated or toothed, to grip the wheels, so that they do not slip back, while going up steep inclines) along the mountainous tracks.

- * The world's longest rail tunnel is in Japan. The Seikan tunnel is 54 kms long and is en route to the island of Hokkaido.

- * The first electric train was run in Germany by Wernher von Siemens, in 1879.

- * In India, the first electric train service was run between Thane and Kurla in Bombay, in 1953.

- * The **Bullet Trains** of Japan run very smoothly and noiselessly at an average speed of about 160 kms per hour. The unique feature of these trains is that the drivers receive signalling instructions on an instrument inside their cabs. Due to the high incidence of earthquakes in Japan, the lines are continuously monitored for earth tremors, of which the drivers are informed.

Compiled by
Thangamani

I AM IN search of a man.

A quiet, nondescript man, practised in the art of waiting on tables.

To everyone who frequented the Gulbadan Cafe in the early sixties, he was known as Rehman Chacha. He probably has another name — a proper one. It must be somewhere. On a ration card, a polling list. Or a tombstone.

Alive or dead, I must find him. I have a debt to repay.

I was fourteen years old when I ran away. It took me three days to put five hundred miles between my luckless past and me. I had no regrets; there was no one who would miss me. The flood that had washed away my village had left me an orphan. Since then I had lived in the home of some distant relations — unwanted and unloved.

On a chilly morning in late November, I stepped out of Old Delhi railway station, clutching the shabby cloth bag that held my few possessions. I was immediately sucked into the tight-knit confusion of the crowds swirling in the narrow street. The noise of bus horns, cycle bells, tongas, tempos, vendors



Story: Madhavi
Mahadevan

Illustrations: Seema
Pandey

and loudspeakers hit me like a giant wave. Bewildered by the melee, I did not notice the overloaded bus till it all but ran me down.

I was saved from an untimely end. A quick-thinking man gave me a hard shove. I bit the dust. The bus roared off. Shaken, I turned to thank my saviour. He was a man in a hurry. Brushing aside my stammered words of gratitude, he jumped back on to an ancient, rickety cycle and disappeared into the crowd. Despite the brevity of the encounter and my own dazed state, I retained the image of a small-built, elderly man in a crumpled *churidar-kurta*. He had a white cap on his bald head and tired, brown eyes that had, nonetheless, looked at me with concern. Several days later, urged on by my sweet tooth to the Gulbadan Cafe, I met him again.

There was a whole 'gali' of eateries in Paharganj where you could get a wholesome, filling meal for as little as one rupee. A cloud of a thousand smells hung over that teeming 'gali'. In that, my nose singled out the aroma of hot *gajar halwa* and my feet, on their own, took me



to the side-street where it was being cooked in a huge iron *kadai* over a wood fire. My mouth watered at the sight of the rich, brick-red *halwa*. In the glass cases that were at eyelevel, I could see a treasure trove of sweets. *Thalis* laden with *burfis*, *laddoos* of *motichoor* and *besan*, *pethas*, *pinnis*, huge basins of *gulab jamun*, *rasmalai*, *rasmallas*. I gazed longingly at them. Feet tramped past me, up and down the worn-out steps of the busy restaurant.

Across the street, a group of urchins had gathered around a lamp post. Ragged. Dirty. Chattering. Squabbling. Some of them held battered cans and metal plates to receive the leftovers that would, in a while, be thrown to them.

I slipped my hand into the pocket of my shorts and wrapped my fingers around the note. My last note. Two rupees. Used wisely it would last me two or three days—till I earned something. There was a tea-shop at the end of the road where I had

helped in the washing-up in return for a tumbler of tea and three rusks. The owner had asked me to come back. But my stomach revolted at the thought of rusks and tea. It craved something more solid. In a fit of recklessness, I walked up the steps into the Gulbadan Cafe.

There was an empty place at the corner table for two. A man sat opposite, wolfing down the last of his *chana-bhatura*. He ignored me, finished eating, left some money and walked off.

The waiter who came to clear the table, glared at me.

"Who allowed you to sit here?" he shouted. "Ullu... This chair is meant for those who can afford to pay. Not for the likes of you. Go and wait out there." He pointed to the band of urchins, adding, "You'll get something as well."

Red faced, I replied curtly, "I'll pay and eat."

"In that case, show me your money. I bet your pockets are empty. You are nothing more than a beggar."

"I have money," I protested, wrenching the note from my pocket and holding it up for all to see.

Suddenly it didn't seem worth anything. I felt uncertain, embarrassed and utterly wretched.

In that tension-filled moment, a calm, controlled voice said, "That's no way to talk to a customer."

The arrogant waiter flushed at this mild rebuke, mumbled something and walked away. I looked up at the man who had spoken. I recognized him straight away as the one who had saved me the other day.

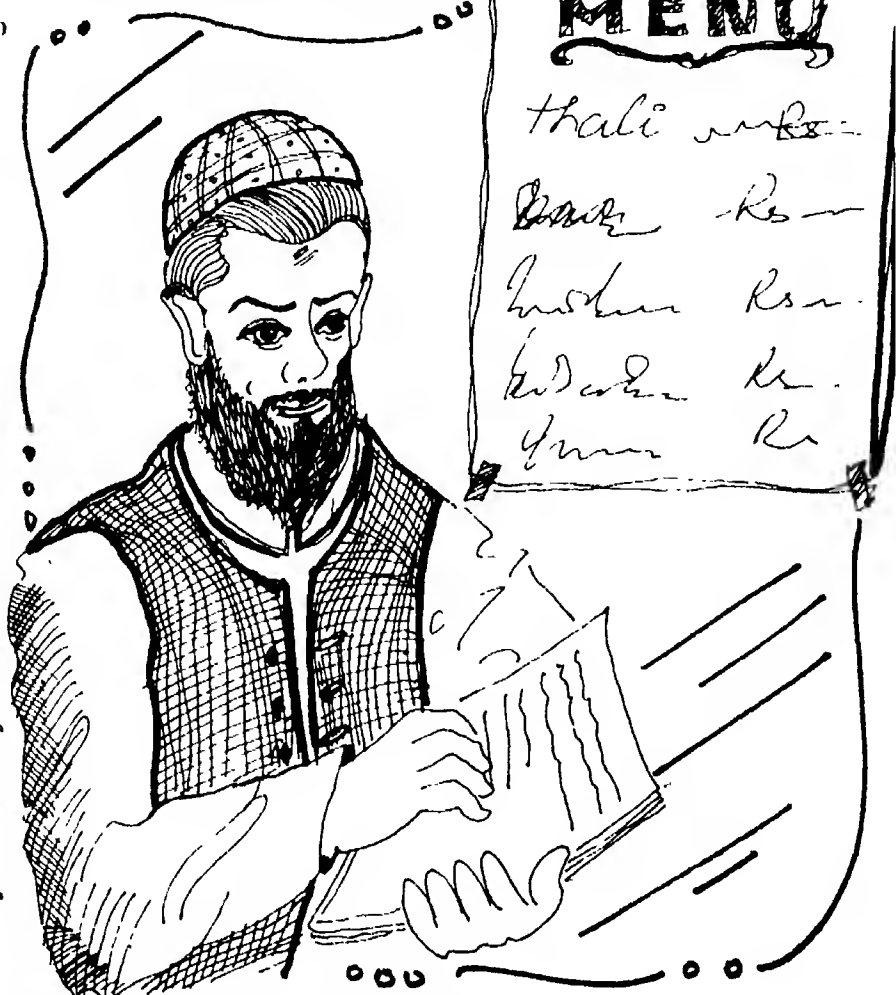
"You must excuse that fellow," said he. "He's new

here. Doesn't know the ropes yet." He smiled and asked courteously, "Now, tell me what would you like to eat?"

I looked up at the price-list on the wall and did some quick calculation. The *thali* was cheap. Just one rupee. If I skipped the second vegetable, curd and salad, I could have a dish of *gajar halwa*.

I placed the order.

There was no scorn or



surprise on his face. He nodded as if it were the most ordinary thing to take down an order for *roti*, vegetable and *halwa*, and went off into the kitchen.

When he emerged a few minutes later, he had a full *thali* in his hand.

Placing it in front of me, he said warmly, "Eat, *beta*. Eat well." I had a sudden, vivid memory of my mother. Of the times when I would return home from school to find her waiting in her simple, spotlessly clean kitchen. We were far from rich; however, she served the meal with such genuine caring and love that it seemed like a royal feast.

She would watch me as I ate, a faint, tender smile on her lips. From that daily ritual she seemed to derive a lot of happiness.

I looked at the appetizing food before me. The little mountain of steaming rice, the soft *rotis*, *dal*, vegetables, crisp, fresh salad, and the *halwa* and simply forgot everything else.

I tucked into my first hot meal in days.

It was only when I had finished spooning in the last mouthful of *gajar halwa* that I remembered the bill. I had eaten far



more than intended. Now I would have to pay for it. There would hardly be any money left after that.

But a funny thing happened when I handed the two rupee note to the elderly waiter. He returned more change than I expected. He had charged me for what I had ordered, not what I ate.

"It's all right," he said in reply to my questioning look. "You desired only to eat the sweet, but your body needed more than that." Then, he added, "Come again, whenever you are hungry." To me, the strangeness of Delhi diminished a little. At last I knew someone. At last I had a friend.

How did I live through those first few months?

I sold newspapers to commuters in the evenings, ran errands for shopkeepers, helped out at the tea stall. In short, I survived by my wits and

my willingness to work. One day the owner of the tea stall told me that his cousin, a *kabadiwallah* in Chawri Bazaar, was looking for an assistant.

Ismail Mirza, was a poor pay master, but he allowed me to sleep in a room overlooking the crowded junkyard. During the daytime, I accompanied him all over the city on his rounds.

Once a week I treated myself to a meal at the Gulbadan Cafe.

I went there for two reasons. They had the best *halwai* in the area.

I also went there to meet Rehman *Chacha*. Except his name, I knew nothing more about the old man. Where did he live? Did he have a family? Children? What were his dreams? It never occurred to me to ask.

He always welcomed me with the warmth reserved for a regular customer. Sometimes I could pay for a proper meal.

On most occasions I could not afford it. However he always saw to it that I ate one. Ismail Mirza had discovered that there was a market for some of the junk he picked up. Rich people were willing to pay good money

for old brassware, lamps, bits of furniture. He diversified into antiques. Business grew. We moved away from Chawri Bazaar.

Did I ever say goodbye to Rehman Chacha? I don't remember. I always meant to come back. It has taken me three decades.

The Gulbadan Cafe no longer exists. It was gutted in a fire. Its owner, Sarfu Mian, has been dead for years. Of Rehman, the waiter, nothing is known.

I have done everything humanly possible to find him or his next of kin. A wife, son or daughter.

In my briefcase is a

cheque. Five lakh rupees. A small token of my gratitude. The 'thank you' that I never did say.

If you ever hear of Rehman, the waiter, who once worked in Gulbadan Cafe, or, of any of his kin, do let me know.

There is some unfinished business.



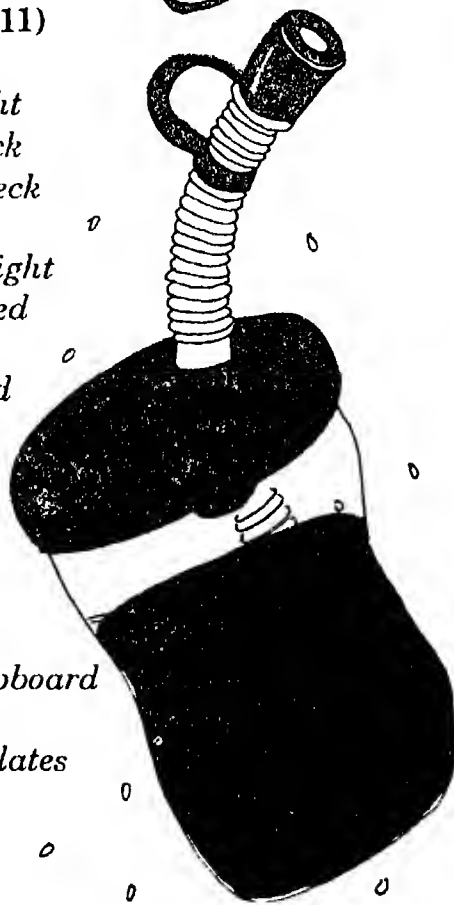
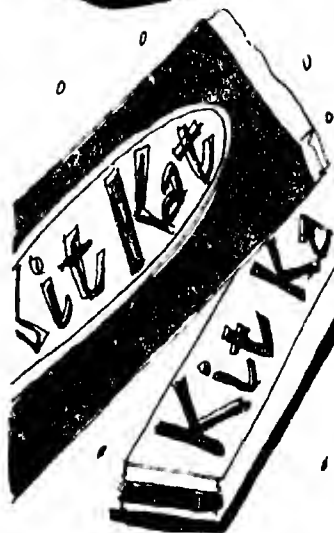
The Midnight Procedure

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (11)

I can never get away with a midnight snack

*Without mom breathing down my neck
I can't help my appetite
Which always demands a meal at night
Like yesterday, after I had gone to bed
My tummy was begging to be fed
But as I thought of the grounding I'd received before*

*I sadly gave a feeble 'no'
The growling rose to a terrible din
I simply had to just give in
I stepped on tiptoe to the door
On the soft carpeted floor
And made my way to the kitchen cupboard
Where the cat peacefully snored
I got out some Pepsi, cake and chocolates
At an amazingly fast rate
'And was just devouring them
When the peace was shattered by a familiar "ahem"!*



THE DAWN

Samarth Kasturia (9)

*The first ray of light,
Racing out to awaken the world,
Making our lives bright,
Dispelling darkness from the world.
The glow of dawn,
Filled with colours so warm,
Their warmth seeping through us,
Bringing light fair and just.
The dawn in all its glory,
Each day writes a new story,
A ray of hope for those in despair,
Filled with warmth of love and care.
The flowers bloom,
The birds chirp,
New life is born,
With every dawn.*

Illustrations: Nilabho

CROSSROADS 2

Historically Yours

S.S.

The second of our crossword series, 'Historically Yours' focuses on Indian history-ancient, medieval and modern.

CLUES

ACROSS

1. Chinese traveller who visited India during Harshavardhana's reign (5, 5)

5. Place of massacre by the British in Punjab (11, 4)

6. Renowned Sanskrit grammarian (6)

9. Founder of the great Magadha empire (9)

10. The 'lion of Punjab' (4, 6, 3)

11. Founder of the slave dynasty (4, 2, 3, 5)

14. Founder of Pataliputra (11)

15. Philosopher saint who established four *mutts* in the four corners of India (13)

16. National leader associated with the Bardoli Satyagraha (11, 5)

DOWN

1. One of the founders of the Vijayanagara empire (7)

2. Ruler whose life changed after the Kalinga War (6)

3. First Commander-in-Chief of India (1, 1, 8)

4. Pallava king who built the rock-cut temples of Mamallapuram (15)

7. Man behind the Bhoodan movement (6, 5)

8. Founder of the Brahmo Samaj (4, 3, 5, 3)

12. Person who started the *Sarvajanik Ganesh* festival to stimulate nationalism (3, 9, 5)

13. Astronomer of the Gupta period (12)

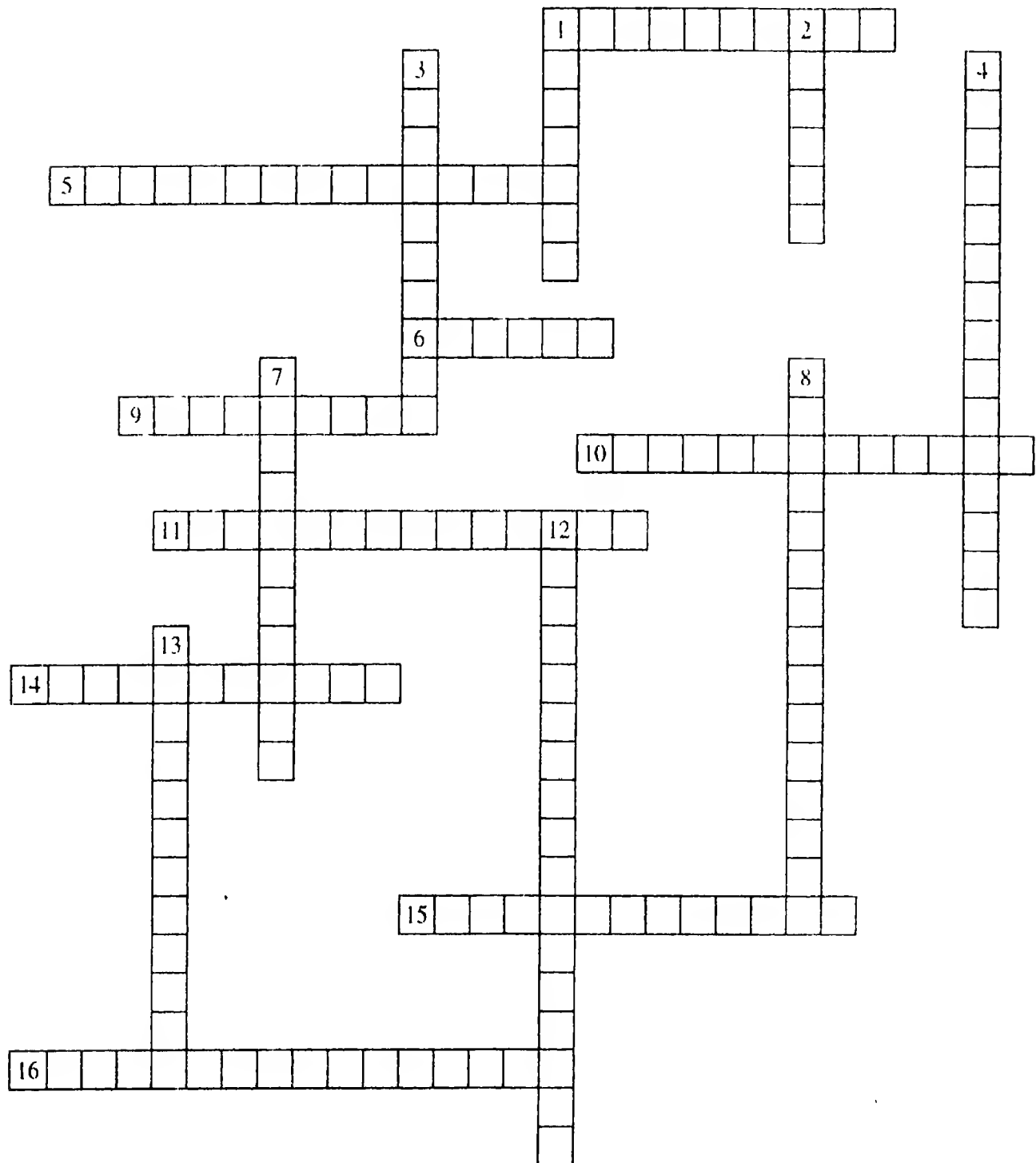
**Hurry up and send in the completed crossword!
The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year
gift subscription to *Children's World*. Last date
for receiving entries: February 15, 1996.**

Answers in the March 1996 issue.

Results in the April 1996 issue.

CROSSROADS 2

Historically Yours



A New Day

*The sun rises, spreading over the horizon
The birds chirp and land on my window-
sill*

*The alarm clock rings in its deafening tone
Breaking the atmosphere's quiet and still
The dew hangs on the little leaves outside
The moon fades away and goes to hide
The flowers bloom in their brilliant
colours*

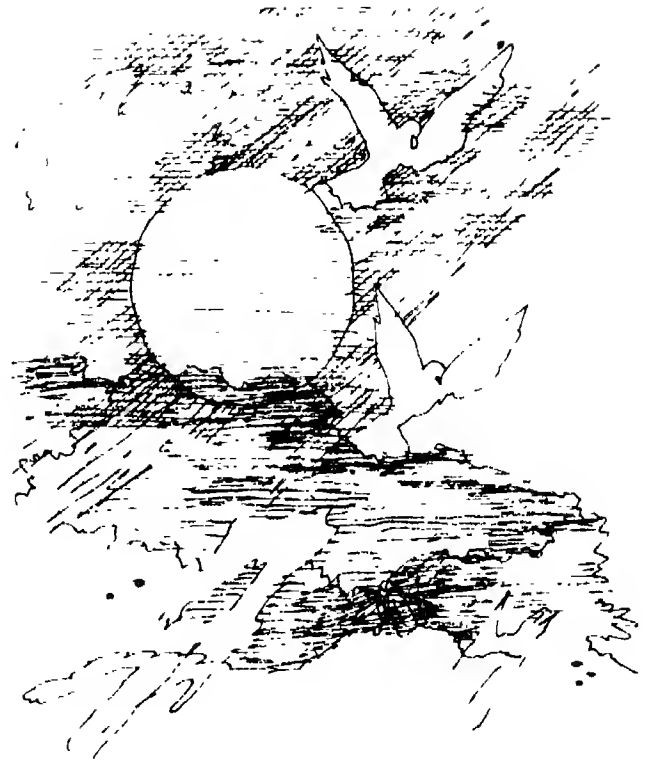
*The cattle move restlessly in their sheds
And people rise from their beds
The bats and owls close their eyes
And the cocks crow at sunrise
The sun lights up every room with its rays
"So what? What is so great?" you might
say*

*"It is just the beginning of another day."
But there is a freshness in the air like new
mown hay*

That makes us feel, "Oh, let it stay."

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (11)

Illustrations: Subir Roy

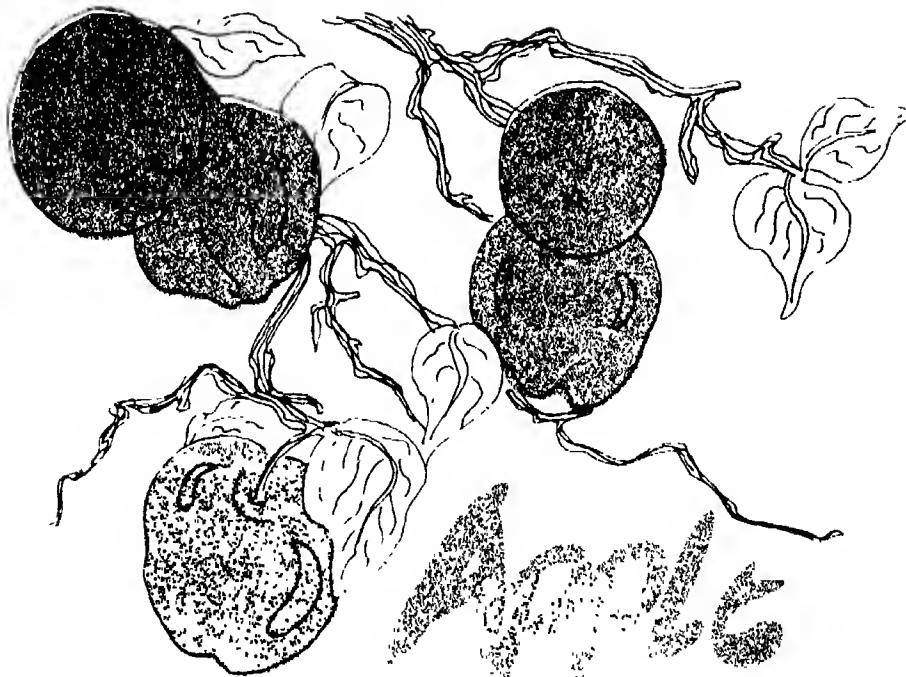


Broken Friendship

*I thought about her all the time
It will never be the same again
Our friendship is broken, our backs are
turned*

*I cannot stand the pain
Memories of the past come flooding in
I wish them all away
What matters is that the bond is broken
And it will never be the same again
What fun we had playing games together
Basking in the sun during sunny weather
Having muddy walks throughout the rain
But it will never be the same again
The quarrel we had the other day
Took all our affection and warmth away
And however I try
It won't be the same
It will never be the same again.*



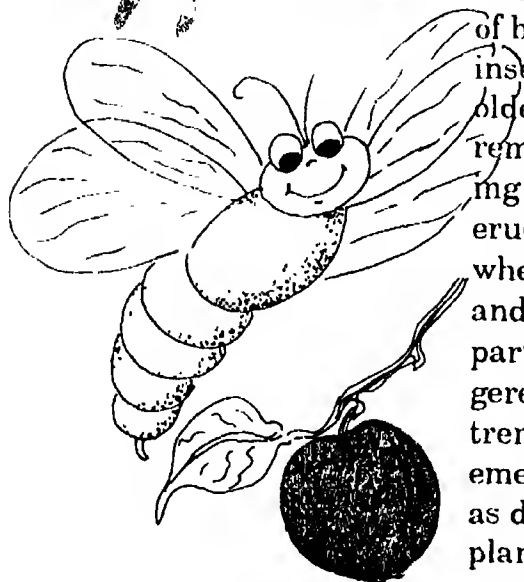


Apple Trees Always Do

Not Quite

Text: Lavkumar
Khacher
CEE-NFS
Illustration:
Seema Pandey

Apples



SCIENTISTS, it seems, have discovered fossil remains of bee and bumble bee-like insects millions of years older than the oldest remains of ancient flowering plants. The debate in erudite circles is over whether, in fact, insects and progenitors of bees in particular had not triggered off evolutionary trends leading to the emergence of angiosperm as dominant plants on the planet. It is really imma-

terial whether bees came first to produce flowers or flowers came first to create bees, for both flowers and bees have evolved together, each demanding higher and higher efficiency from the other. Insects in general and bees in particular are the most important agents for pollination to an extent where entire groups of plants depend on insects to produce fruits like mangoes, *jamun*, figs, pomegranates, apples, peaches, pears and apricots among others.

Though everyone is aware of this fact, our entire approach to horticulture is sadly casual. 'Pest' control measures have poisoned the entire countryside and valuable insects have been decimated thoughtlessly along with a few pest species.

A good many of us have been aware of impending disaster but the anti-insect lobby has been so strong and their arguments so persuasive that a few of us who were worried just could not get a word in edgeways. Besides, the press, which today is so willing to take on environmental issues, was openly patronising to what was considered 'fussing' by naturalists.

I came to Manali, Himachal Pradesh, on April 22. The orchards were loaded with pale pink apple blossoms and a faint fragrance pervaded the air. Everyone was expecting a bumper crop of apples and the future looked great.

But the naturalist in me was uncomfortable. There was something wrong. What was it? Was I feeling the effect of altitude? Was it old age finally taking over? Then the flash of realization came—the hum of bees was missing! I spent hours observing a couple of trees—there was not a single bee! I warned my friends in the village—there would be no fruit! Then it clouded over, and cold rain started. The flowers started falling and were soon gone. From Manali, Pattikuhl, Katrain, Naggar and Kullu came the news that the fruit setting was poor. The rain was largely blamed. No one was prepared to accept the basic truth that during the last decade bees have died out and apple yields have been steadily decreasing. Of course, it was always the elements which were blamed—cold wind and frost if there

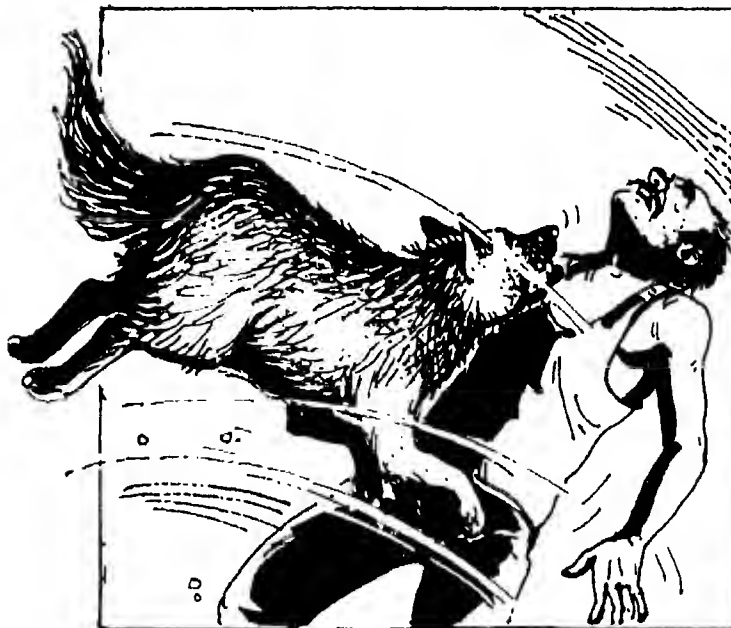
was no rain or hail; wet weather; late snow or hail—everything other than the mindless spraying of poison up and down the valley.

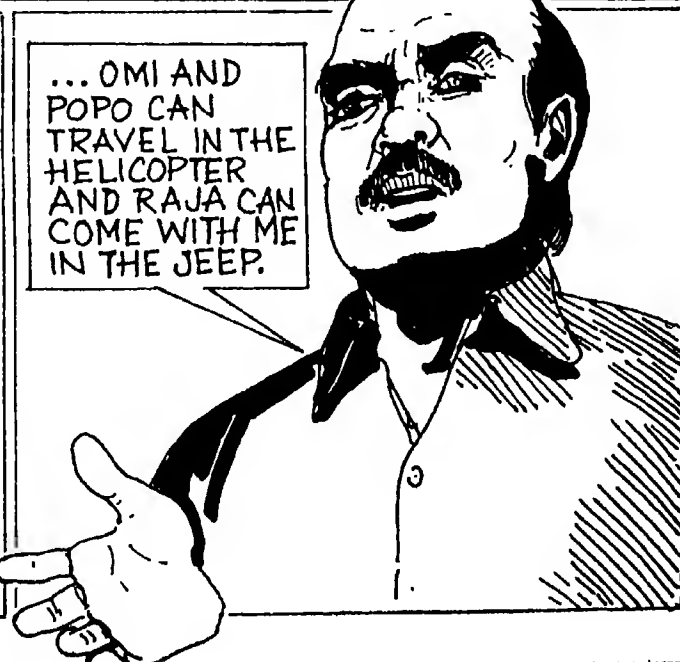
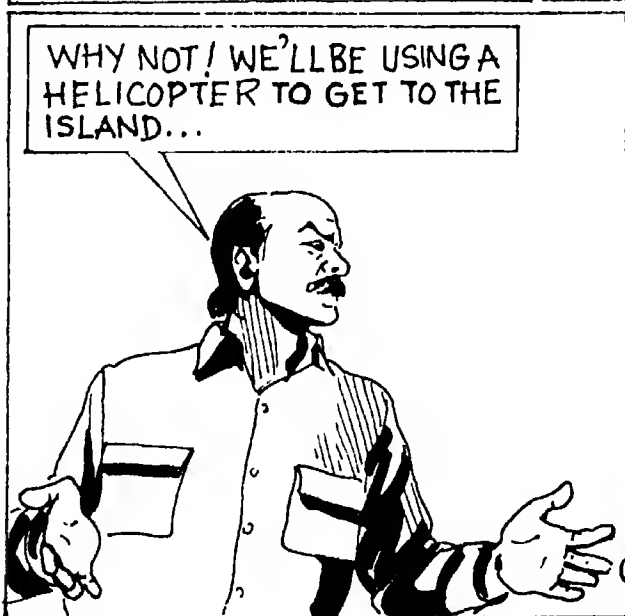
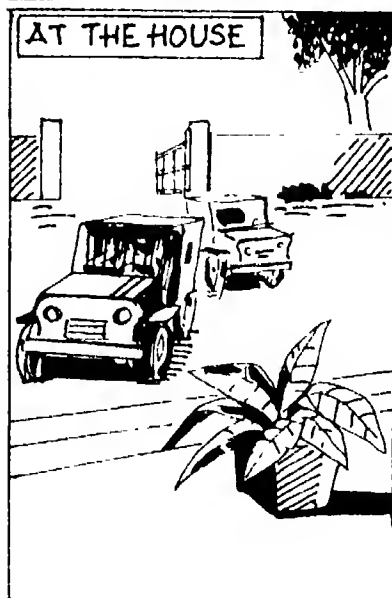
The upshot was a muted announcement by Himachal Pradesh authorities that apple yields would be poor. Even at this stage, the reasons being put forward were everything other than the simple fact that a millennia of interrelationship between flowers and insects had been taken for granted and a close natural bond had been tampered with in a cavalier fashion.

What astounds me is that scientists who should have been the first to warn people of crop disaster, are coming up with explanations like “perhaps the trees are old...” and so on. Even the dullest of peasants will tell you that two different strains of apples are necessary for the fruit to set. How can pollen travel from the flowers of a Golden to a Royal and a Red if there are no bees? Surely, while advocating widespread spraying of insecticides, a massive drive should have been mounted to strengthen the keeping of bees. The apiary depart-

ment should have set up vigorous bee colonies in all the orchards. The panic among the orchard growers of Himachal needs to be managed and they must prepare themselves for bumper setting of fruits in the spring of 1996 by raising a vociferous demand for beehives, themselves resisting the pressure to spray fungicides and pesticides as a matter of routine. To strengthen my contention, apple trees at higher levels had a fine crop this year. But the simplistic explanation going around is that the trees flowered later and missed the wet spell; no one credits the wild bees up there from the forests to have done the good work!

While scientists may continue their erudite arguments about who came first—the bee or the flower, let us accept the very basic fact that flowers need bees just as bees need flowers and that in their interaction, we, the beneficiaries, get fruit along with honey. Also, let us always keep in mind, before spraying any pesticide, that bees are the most vulnerable victims precisely because they are so intimate with plants and their flowers.





SOME TIME LATER.

HERE WE ARE. THE ISLAND IS BEYOND THE SAND BOG. BUT THE BOG IS IMPASSABLE.



HERE IS ANOTHER WAY BY THE HILL BUT THAT IS VERY UNSAFE. WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE THE CHANCE, I'M AFRAID...



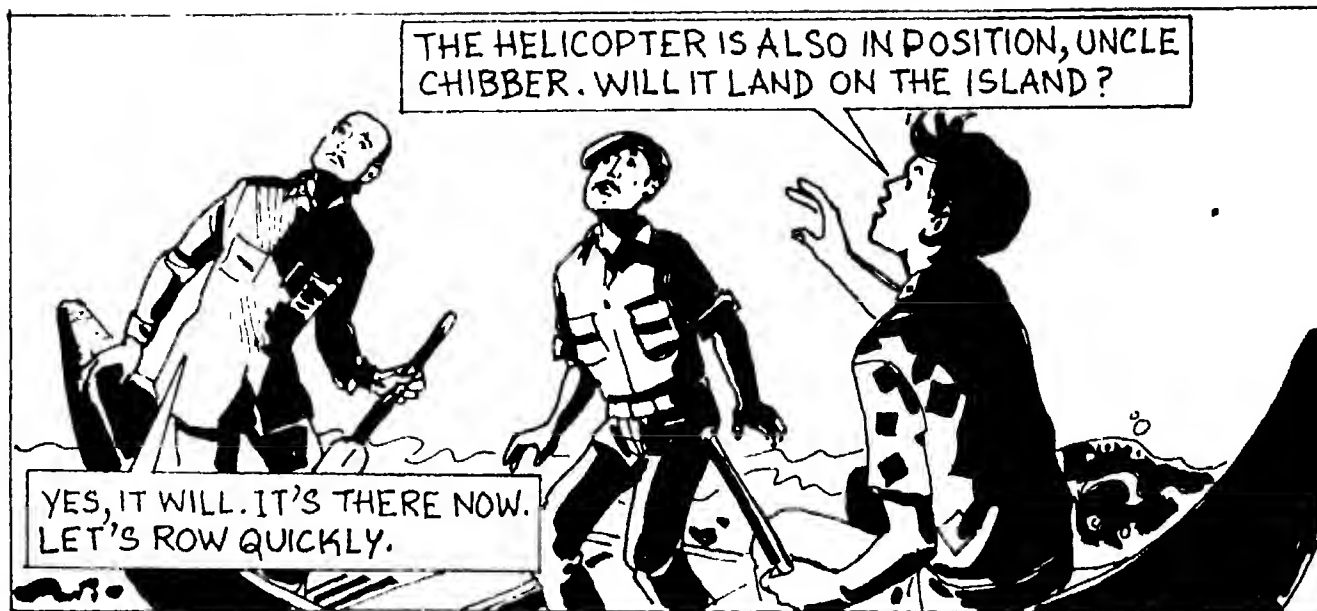
WE'LL USE A ROPE TO CLIMB UP AND DOWN THE HILL. NOW, COME ON.

SOON.

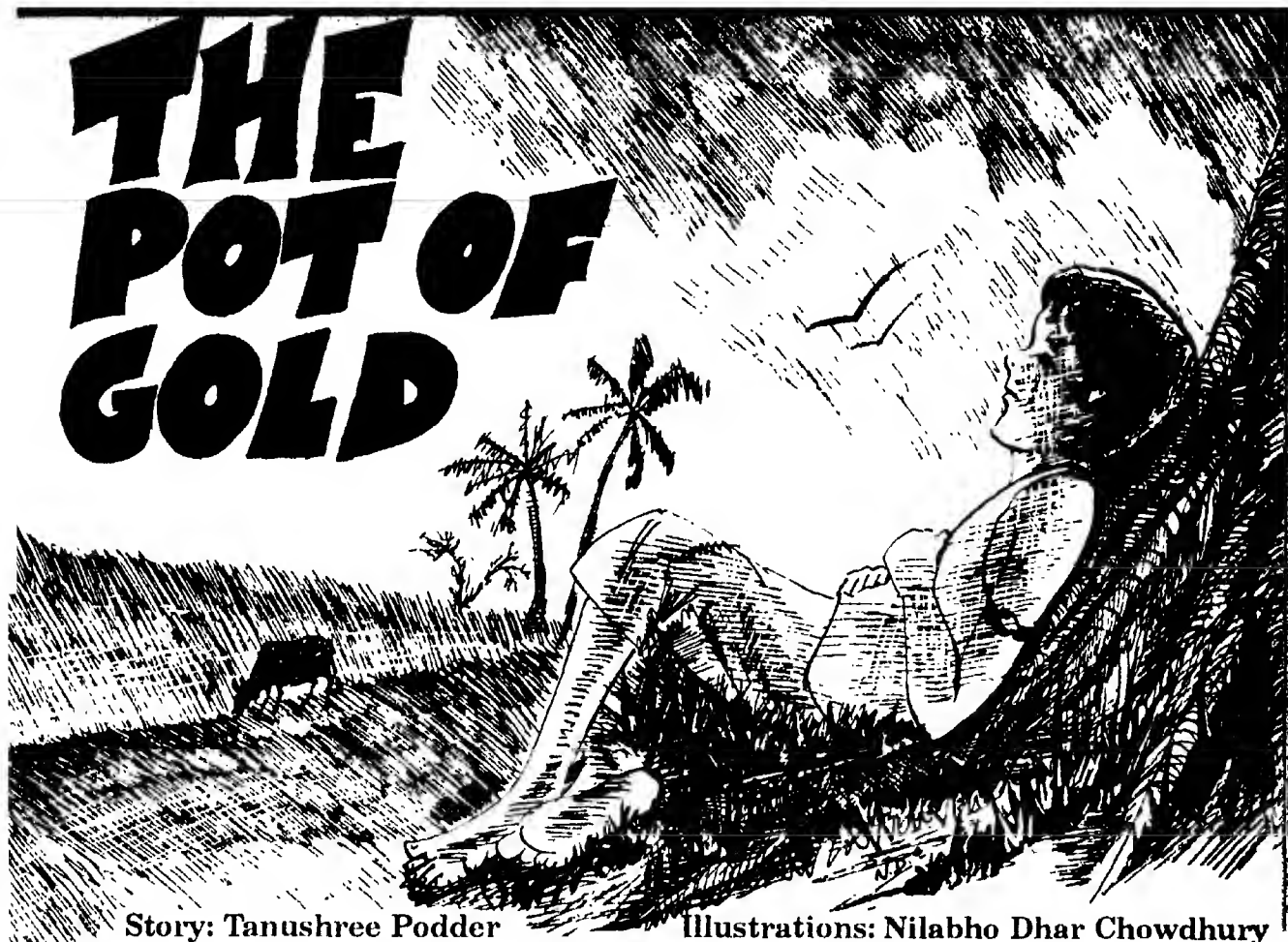
WE ARE IN A COVE, RAJA. THE FISHERMEN KEEP THEIR BOATS HERE. THE TIDE'S IN OUR FAVOUR...



...LET'S TAKE THE FIRST EMPTY BOAT. KEEP YOUR HEAD LOW.



THE POT OF GOLD



Story: Tanushree Podder

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

KRISHNA was one of the laziest lads in the village.

Although he was a tall and robust young man, he seldom did any work.

While his weak and old father toiled in the fields the whole day, Krishna lazed away under the shade of the large mango tree near the village well. He spent his time dreaming of the riches that would become his, one day. In his dreams he saw himself as a young man living in a large and luxurious house, wearing splendid clothes, with dozens of servants to do all the work while he

walked in his beautiful garden which was surrounded by tall, green trees.

Krishna's mother would scold him for his laziness, every day. "If only you would help your father in the fields, we could have a better crop. Your father is old and weak, he cannot work very hard."

But her words had no effect on Krishna who would spend the entire day under the tree only to return home when he was hungry. Krishna's father had stopped scolding his son a long time back when he saw that his words had no effect on the lazy lad.

The old man worked as hard as he could but he could not earn much. The crop he harvested was not enough to provide for the three of them.

One day while passing the village school, Krishna heard the teacher telling his students about a rainbow.

"At the end of a rainbow lies a pot of gold," the old teacher was saying.

Krishna had never gone to school. His father had tried hard to send the boy to school but the lazy fellow had not been interested in learning anything. Krishna now stood under the window of the

classroom and wondered about the pot of gold that lay at the end of the rainbow.

'I must get the pot of gold before anyone else does so,' he thought.

After that day, Krishna would lie under the mango tree waiting for the rainbow to appear in the sky so that he could get the pot of gold.

'If I can get the gold, I will be a rich man, and my father will no longer have to work in the fields nor will my mother shout at me,' thought the lazy lad.

The hot days of summer had ended and dark clouds gathered in the sky. One day, after a brief shower, the beautiful band of colours made its appearance in the sky. There was a bow made of violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, and red shades. The rainbow looked startlingly beautiful against the clear blue of the sky.

Krishna had been sleeping happily, dreaming of a large and luxurious cottage. Suddenly his eyes flew open and he saw the rainbow splashed across the sky. He ran out and stared at it for some time. Then he quickly tied up a few clothes and some food in a bundle and set



out in search of the pot of gold. He did not tell anyone about his journey because he wanted to give his parents a surprise.

At first he began running along the rainbow. He kept running but the rainbow seemed endless. At last he grew tired and slowed down. He walked and walked till his limbs ached but the rainbow did not end. A rainbow does not stay for very long in the sky so it soon disappeared. Krishna had come a long way from his home. By that time night had fallen. He thought the rainbow would reappear in the morning.

'I will spend the night here,' he decided, choosing a spot near a stream of water. 'In the morning, I'll set out again. I'm sure the rainbow will appear again in the morning.'

He ate a little of the food he had brought with him and went to sleep with his bundle of clothes under his head.

When he got up in the morning, there was no trace of the rainbow. He washed himself in the cool water of the stream and wondered which way to go. It was a very nice place, full of green trees and flowers. A cool breeze blew across the stream.

Krishna stretched himself and looked around. He spotted an old man sitting under a tree.

"Can you tell me where the pot of gold is?"

"Which pot of gold are you talking about?" asked the old man.

"The one at the end of the rainbow," replied Krishna. "I am sure the rainbow ended here. I saw it yesterday."

Krishna then went on to explain how he had heard the teacher at the village school talking about the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. Krishna told him about his old parents in the village and how hard his father had to work in the fields.

"I've decided to find the pot of gold so that we can all become rich."

The old man was a very wise person. He soon understood the dreams of the lazy lad. Nodding wisely he told Krishna, "Yes, there is a pot of gold under the ground at that spot." And he pointed out a patch of land near the stream.

With a great deal of energy and enthusiasm Krishna began digging at the spot while the old man sat under the tree and watched. Soon Krishna had dug up a lot of earth.

He grew tired but he didn't find the gold.

"Where is the pot?" he asked.

"It's not so easy to find the pot, dear boy. You have to plant these mango saplings in the earth. When the trees grow, you will find gold on their branches."

Krishna took the mango saplings from the old man and planted them in a row.

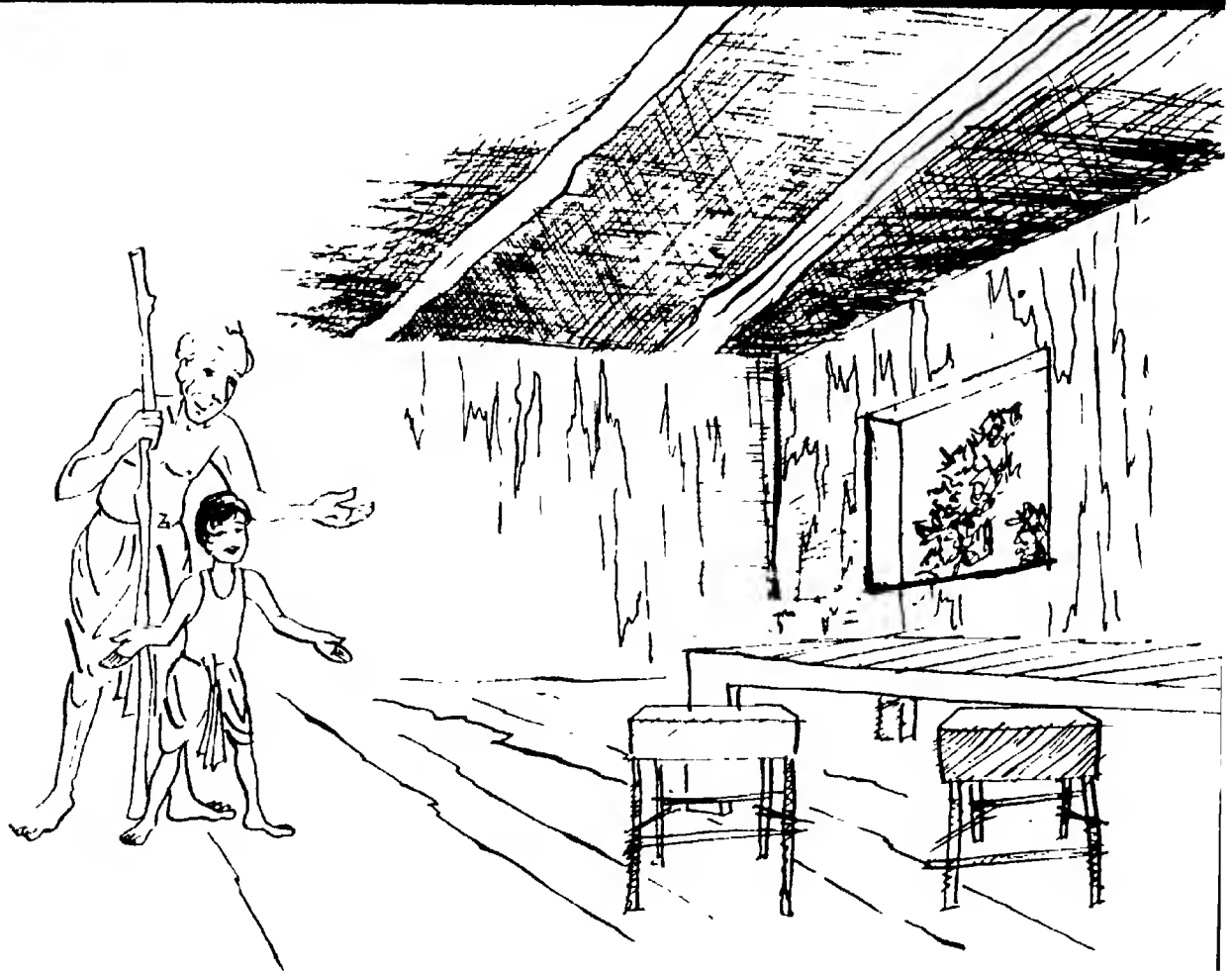
"But the trees will take a long time to grow," he said.

"You can't get a pot of gold so easily, can you?" said the old man. "You will have to be patient. It will

take a few years. While you are waiting for the gold to make its appearance, you will need a place to stay. Why don't you make a nice hut near the stream. It is a very pleasant place to stay."

With a little help from the old man, Krishna got busy with the making of the hut. He chopped wood, collected stones and straw. He worked tirelessly all day to build the hut. The old man provided him with suggestions for making the house. At the end of a few days, a pretty house was ready. Krishna stood back and looked at it proudly. His house looked





much better than the one they had in the village.

"Now we must have some wooden stools and a bed," suggested the old man.

Once again Krishna got busy making the furniture under the guidance of the old man.

They put the furniture in the new house and it looked truly cosy and comfortable.

"I think we could plant some vegetables and buy some hens and goats. That will take care of our food problem," said the old man whom Krishna had generously invited to share the house with.

"I don't have the money to buy hens and goats," said Krishna.

"That's no problem. We can sell the wood you chopped yesterday. That will give you enough money for the hens and the goat."

So Krishna sold the wood and bought some hens and a goat. Together, the old man and Krishna made a small shed for the goat. They also planted potatoes, tomatoes, beans and brinjals. Soon the house was bustling with activity. The little house was surrounded by clusters of flowers and vegetables, the hens clucked

as they laid eggs and the goat bleated. The mango saplings also grew at a tremendous pace.

The old man taught Krishna the art of weaving baskets. Without seeming to realise it, Krishna had become a hard working young man. He felt proud of his nice house and garden. He also bought an ox and began working on a small patch of field.

A year flew by. Krishna and the old man had enough for themselves and more. There were plenty of vegetables and eggs. With the money Krishna earned from

weaving baskets, he had bought a cow too. The old man was always giving him good advice and Krishna worked hard. When there was more than enough of everything, Krishna sent for his parents. They were delighted to see the lovely house and the prosperity of their son.

In the meantime the mango trees continued to grow. Krishna had not given up waiting for the gold. At last when it was time for the trees to bear fruit, Krishna saw tiny little mangoes making an appearance on the trees. He grew very angry and shouted at the old man.

"You lied to me. You told me that the trees would bear gold but they have borne nothing but mangoes."

"Yes, my dear man, how can a mango tree bear anything but mangoes," replied the old man.

"Why did you lie to me?"

"I lied so that you could become rich by hard work. Look at your house, the cow, goat and hens. See the amount of vegetables, wheat and rice that grows in your fields, and tell me if they are not worth several pots of gold. When you sell the mangoes that are growing on your trees,

you will get some more money. You can even employ some men to work for you. Now, can you understand why I lied to you? Laziness and dreaming does not make anyone rich. It is only hard work that can make you rich. See how happy you have made your parents. Your

old father does not have to slog in the fields now. Does it not make you happy?"

Krishna realised the truth in the old man's words. He thanked the old man for all that he had done and promised him never to be lazy again.



DEAF DOLPHINS

A Performance in Mime and Dance

A review by Sudha Sanjeev

What is it that dolphins are most known for? Their sense of hearing. Ironical, isn't it? That these dolphins who danced and moved and mimed with unrestrained gusto and heart-cheering verve lacked just that—hearing! And yet, many in the audience watching Astad Deboo and Zarin Chaudhuri's fun show of mime, dance and adaptations of poems of Vikram Seth's *Beastly Tales* presented by The Action Players—Calcutta's Deaf Theatre Company—were hardly aware of the lacuna. "Can they really not hear the music?" was a question that arose time and again in the audience's mind. What must it 'sound' and feel like to them?

Such doubts were cleared when, in the middle of the second half of the programme, the

group performed a dance without any music.

"Where's the music, Mamma?" came an audible whisper. Only to be explained to, that this silence was what the dancers actually felt and experienced while they danced. Only, for these actors, this silence was...forever. The truth rammed home like a sledgehammer.

As Astad Deboo, the choreographer, clarified, the movements are broken up into beats of eight and the actors are trained to count silently and watch out for the cues (which maybe a pat on the shoulder or a stamp on the floor). Deboo has been successful in developing a high degree of co-ordination, synchronization and above all, improvisation.



Three of Vikram Seth's poems from *Beastly Tales* have been adapted by the group. The poems are set in the human world: 'The Hare and the Tortoise' in the world of advertising, publicity and media madness, 'The Fog and the Nightingale' in the world of performing arts, fame and fortune, and 'The Monkey and the Crocodile' in the corporate world of money and glitter.

The second half of the show entitled 'The tapestry of movement' was pure dance. The high points were during the improvisation numbers where Deboo himself danced and the actors followed. Eyes riveted on their teacher, they moved with grace,



agility and rhythm. The standing ovation and encore that followed was but a fitting end.

Mobile Creches is to be commended for their enterprise in bringing the

Action Players to Delhi. That the auditorium was not packed is a statement telling more of the preoccupations of an average Delhiite rather than the calibre of the show.

Answers to Crossroads-1

Across

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 2. Bill Gates | 4. U.R. Ananthamurthy | 10. Steven Spielberg |
| 12. Neem Ka Thana | 14. Burkina Faso | 15. Malleswari |

Down

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Jaffna | 3. Aung San Syu Kyi | 5. Nigeria | 6. Yitzhak Rabin |
| 7. Ken Saro Wiwa | 8. Hyderabad | 9. Jaspal Rana | 11. Beijing |
| 13. Tansu Ciller | | | |

Of Spectres and Spirits

GHOST STORIES

By Jaya Paramasivan

Illustrated by Suddhasattwa Basu

Published by Frank Educational Aids Pvt. Ltd.

Price: Rs.37.50

Ghosts! Does a finger of fear run down your spine at the mention? Most of us may not believe in spirits and the other world, but we are not averse to a good story about the same. The more frightening it is the better, for then every shadow and each unexplained sound takes on a spectral meaning. At least for a while.

Jaya Paramasivan's *Ghost Stories* is a collection of six stories. In 'The Haunted

Mansion', three cousins seek an explanation to a headless ghost. On 'One Rainy Afternoon', twins Anna and Rina meet a childhood pal in an old haunt. But the truth about him is disconcerting.

One day while fishing, John lands 'The Blithe Spirit' instead of a trout. Just before 'The Special Party', the spirits of Mona and her grandmother happen to enter each other's bodies such that Mona is trapped in her grandmother's physical form and her grandmother in young Mona's. No wonder then that everybody is struck by the transformation of the shy, withdrawn Mona into the swinging, gay girl at the party.

'The Long Search' is the story of an antique mirror, seeking the mansion where it first hung and its revelation of the dark deeds of its owner. 'The Lady Who Loved Children' cannot persuade Tarun and Arul to stay awhile with her, perhaps, because she belongs to another age.

For an artist of Suddhasattwa Basu's talent, the illustrations are more than a mite disappointing. They appear half hearted and as if done in a hurry. As for the cover, there is nothing even remotely ghostly about it.

Although not spine-chilling, *Ghost Stories* is a fair read.

Bhavana Nair

Glue Drops of Nature

Mukta Kasturia (15)

*From buds into flowers they bloom,
Their soft loveliness casts away all gloom,
Their lingering fragrance is like fond
remembrance,
Embalming and soothing is their pure
elegance.*

*On a soft petal, a dew drop paused,
A flutter, in many a heart, it has caused,
A spray of colours nature has bestowed,
To brighten our lives more and more.
Flowers for the worship of the Lord,
Flowers for the loved one,
Flowers for appreciation,
Flowers to mark the end of creation.*

Mystery of the Cigarette Stubs

Story: Kiran Kasturia

Illustrations: Beejee

ONE DAY, our trio, walked down to the ruins of an old fort not very far from our houses. It was our favourite haunt. In the cool shade of old, mossy walls we listened to music and gossiped. We had brought along some sandwiches and cold drinks. Tushar had brought along "Brainvita", a game to be played alone, while Aseem and I settled down to a game of cards. Music floated through the air. We were engrossed in our games, and only when a terribly discordant note which had nothing to do with the music that was playing struck our ears, we looked at each other. The noise was not repeated, so shrugging our shoulders, we got back to our game. Anyway, there was not a soul in sight. Even the birds had taken shelter in the trees from

the sweltering heat. Just as we started concentrating on our games, we heard the peculiar sound again. We sat up and listened intently—before we got up to explore the source. We poked around a bit but could not find anything nor could we see anybody around. Feeling uneasy we decided to leave. We packed up and were leaving, when we got the faintest whiff of cigarette smoke, or was it our imagination?

"Let's get moving," Tushar urged us as he saw that curious look in my eyes. I couldn't leave any puzzle unsolved.

Aseem too nudged me, "Come on, Samarth, this is nothing but your imagination."

I wasn't convinced that it was my imagination, but persuaded by my friends, I went along. Even though no one

talked about it any more, I could not forget the sound or smell. I couldn't sleep well that night.

Next morning, when we met, there was an unspoken understanding that we would try to find out what was going on. Determined, we went to our haunt. There was no one there, no sound, no smell. We combed the area minutely but found nothing. Feeling deflated we were about to return, when Tushar shouted, "Hey, what is this?"

We ran towards him. We saw him pointing at some cigarette stubs.

Quickly I fished out my handkerchief and placed the stubs in it, folded the hanky and put it in my pocket. After a second survey we returned home.

All day long we pondered over how the stubs had got there. Had someone come there? Our quiet



retreat had assumed a mysterious aura. We took out the stubs and, careful not to touch them to preserve the finger prints, smelt them. They smelt different. We wondered if something fishy might be going on.

"I don't think there is anything funny going on," said Tushar. "Just a figment of your overactive imagination, Samarth."

"I agree," nodded Aseem, "you are just

making a mountain out of a molehill." But my mind was not at rest.

The next day, I quietly slipped out of the house without informing anyone. I cycled to the old fort, and hid my bike in the bushes. Determined to solve the mystery of the cigarette stubs, I moved stealthily. The ruins revealed no clues. I decided to comb a wider radius of the ruins, than we had done before. Careful search through

the grass and bushes proved fruitless. Yet, I could not ignore the danger signal my sixth sense was receiving. Standing under a tree, I tried to work out my next move.

As I turned to walk away, my foot hit against something hard. Curious, I looked at the leaves and dry grass under my feet. Dry grass! How could the grass be dry under the tree when it was green around. Hurriedly, I removed the grass and leaves and stared in amazement at a cement slab.

Now what! I tried to move it but it was too heavy for me. Looking around, I found an iron rod. Using it as a lever, I heaved and succeeded in pushing it away. Aghast at the sight that met my eyes, I stared at the well-dug tunnel. Lowering myself into it, I moved cautiously. The tunnel ended in a large, circular room that was approximately under the ruins. The sound we heard that day must have come from here. Amazed, I looked around and saw lots of boxes piled one on top of another.

I groped my way around, with the help of a

small ray of light filtering through the tunnel. My hand touched cold metal and then glass. It was a lantern. Hoping to find a match, I felt around the lantern and I did find a match box. Lighting the lantern I started exploring in earnest. Most of the boxes were sealed. In one of them I found bags of white powder. Suspecting it to be heroin or cocaine, I slipped a small packet into my pocket. Fearing intrusion, I hurried along. Poking at another box, I felt it might give way after some coaxing. I took out my pocket knife and forced the lid up just enough to have a glimpse. I could not believe my eyes.

Bringing the lantern closer, I was shocked to see shining black revolvers. Firearms! Smugglers! Drug traffickers! I had put my hand in hot oil! It suddenly struck me, if I was caught, these desperados would not spare my life. They would not want a witness. I panicked and decided to move fast.

Putting out the lantern, I stood for a while, allowing my eyes to adjust to the darkness. As I came near the mouth of the tunnel, I heard some sounds. I

cursed myself for not informing Tushar and Aseem.

"Hey, who has entered our den?" growled someone.

Breaking into a cold sweat, I moved quietly to hide behind the pile of boxes. Two men entered the tunnel and came into the room.

"Who is there? Come out or you will never see daylight again," the same voice, I thought. I stopped

breathing as I sensed them groping their way around.

"Someone has taken away our lantern. I cannot find it in the usual place," wailed a softer voice.

"Quiet! He must be hiding here. I will catch him and teach him a lesson."

Drenched in cold sweat, with teeth clenched, I inched my way to the mouth of the tunnel and



made a dash for it. With all my strength, I ran through the tunnel and heard the shouts behind me.

"There he is."

"Catch him, he should not escape at any cost."

Not stopping to feel the pain as my head hit a corner of the cement slab, I heaved the slab back to close the opening.

I ran to the cycle hidden in the bushes and caught sight of my friends gesticulating and coming towards me.

"What happened? What a sight you are!" exclaimed Tushar.

"What have you been up to?" asked Aseem.

"Please, I will explain later. Quick, police, smugglers," I panted.

"What are you mumbling? Have you gone mad?" Aseem asked disapprovingly.

Tushar saw the shock and dismay on my face and said, "Okay, let's go."

We cycled to the nearest police station. My legs were trembling and my heart was beating at an unaccustomed pace. Once at the police station, I blurted out my story and produced the bag of white powder. It was indeed cocaine! The officer jumped into the jeep and

motioning us to accompany him, drove away at great speed. Back there I could hardly believe what I had braved my way through. The slab was removed, and the two men with all the contraband were caught and brought to the police station.

The officer thanked me and promised a cash reward. Reward? I had got my reward; I had solved a mystery! We reached home. My parents were shocked by the state I was in. Admonishing me for the danger I had put my

life in, I still detected a gleam of pride in their eyes. "Hero", "Karamchand", "Sherlock Holmes" were some of the names my sister, Kriti, called me thereafter.

Indeed, after a month, when we had all forgotten about the incident, I was summoned to the police station.

"Now, what have you been upto?" queried my mother fearfully.

Once at the police station, I was taken into the office.

Here sat an impressive police officer.

"Commissioner *Saheb*, wish him," the constable whispered in my ear.

"Good Morning, Sir," I blurted out.

The Commissioner nodded and stood up to shake hands with me. "Congratulations, brave boy!" he said.

"Thank you Sir," I smiled uncertainly.

He handed over a cheque for Rs.1000. Back home joyfully, I decided to invest the money in something purposeful. We formed a "Mystery Club" naturally!

So, friends, any unsolved mystery in your vicinity, come along to the "Mystery Club". Don't forget to keep your eyes open for clues!



Hardly a Child's Life

By Reader of the month: Vaijayanti Tonpe

"Dear Mimmy,
BOREDOM!!! SHOOT-
ING!!! SHELLING!!!
PEOPLE BEING
KILLED!!! DESPAIR!!!
HUNGER!!! MISERY!!!
FEAR!!!

That's my life! The life of an innocent eleven-year-old schoolgirl! A schoolgirl without a school, without the fun and excitement of school. A child without games, without friends, without the sun, the birds, without nature, without fruit, without chocolate or sweets with just a little powdered milk. In short a child without a childhood. A wartime child. I now realize that I am really living through a war, I am witnessing an ugly, disgusting war. I and thousands of other children in this town that is being destroyed, that is crying, weeping, seeking help but getting none, God, will this ever stop, will I ever be a schoolgirl again, will

I ever enjoy my childhood again? I once heard that childhood is the most wonderful time of your life. And it is. I loved it, and now an ugly war is taking it all away from me. Why? I feel sad. I feel like crying. I am crying."

So wrote Zlata Filipovic in her diary on Monday, June 29, 1992. She was just 11½ years old then.

Even as the tears blurred my vision, scenes from news flashes on BBC, CNN, Doordarshan flashed before my eyes. Ruins of buildings caught in shell fire, shattered glass, rubble and human wrecks amidst it all—the adults angry, sad, helpless. The children bewildered—caught in a war not of their making—deprived of a normal life—scarred by the ugliness of war fever. True, the scenes could have been from any oppressed area. Punjab, Kashmir, Somalia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Sarajevo.

But Sarajevo it was! Zlata Filipovic was writing of a child's life in Sarajevo.

Yet Zlata's diary when she began writing it, was not meant to be an account of war. It was the typical, pre-teen scribbling of mundane, everyday events when it began on Monday, September 2, 1991.

"Behind me—a long, hot summer and the happy days of summer holidays, ahead of me—a new school year. I'm starting fifth grade. I'm looking forward to seeing my friends at school, to being together again..."

In fact so routine are the early entries of her diary that it could be any middle-class child, anywhere in the world making the following entry on October 6, 1991.

"I'm watching the American Top 20 on MTV. I don't remember a thing, who's in what place.

"I feel great because

I've just eaten a 'Four Seasons' PIZZA with ham, cheese, ketchup and mushrooms. It was yummy. Daddy bought it for me at Galija's (the pizzeria around the corner)...

"I've finished studying and tomorrow I can go to school BRAVELY, without being afraid of getting a bad grade. I deserve a good grade because I studied all weekend and I didn't even go out to play with my friends in the park..."

The next few entries are joyful accounts of school and Zlata and her family's visit to Crnotina where they owned a 150-year-old house with a tower.

A hint of trouble comes a week later when her father is called up by the police reserve. Still it seems only like a family's sadness at a member going away and the same entry ends on a note of cheerfulness when Zlata states that "Daddy would be home in two days".

In November 1991 trouble is still distant... "The situation in Dubrovnik is getting worse and worse" and "...petrol has been a problem lately. Daddy often spends hours wait-

ing in the queue for petrol..."

Even now for Zlata the situation around her is the adult's problem. "War in Croatia, war in Dubrovnik, some reservists in Herzegovina. Mummy and Daddy keep watching the news on TV. They are worried. Mummy often cries looking at the terrible pictures on TV. They talk mostly politics with their friends. What is politics? I haven't got a clue. And I'm not really interested. I just finished watching *Midnight Caller* on TV."

Wars do not choose! Wars today do not look at the faces of innocent children and unsuspecting families and hesitate to tear through their peaceful and mundane living patterns. As I read on... instead of being pleasantly surprised, I am shocked to learn that Zlata is only a couple of days older than my own daughter. An irresistible desire to throw one's arms round the child and cocoon her in a world of love and out of harm's way is smothered midway by the realisation that neither her Mum nor Dad chose to thrust this war upon her. The cocoon of *their* love—however snug

and cosy—is not enough to erase the scars of a war raging outside their window. Just as *our not wanting* the unrest in Kashmir, in Punjab... in Sri Lanka is not enough to douse the flames of unreasonable fighting that the users of ugly weapons likes guns, shells, rockets and missiles believe in...

Page by page, entry by entry Zlata unfolds the agonisingly slow and painful spread of an anonymous war... and its effect on law-abiding and ordinary citizens caught in its midst. Slowly, items taken for granted in peace time start disappearing from the stores. Essentials become costlier... Electricity that has been erratic is now cut off often. So much so that in four days, if a bulb comes on, it is cause for celebration. But in winter, in Sarajevo it is not just darkness one has to live with if there is no power supply—there is no heating! The freezing temperatures have to be battled—clothes alone will not suffice—especially in a cold, bereft cellar, where Zlata, her family and others like them have to shelter to escape shell fire. Furniture is sawed up to make a fire of sorts. Water no longer comes in taps—freezing buckets of water

have to be carried by Zlata's emaciated and hernia-affected father.

In the midst of all this other things happen too. Families are getting separated, as those who can, try to send their children away to safer places. Zlata's parents consider sending her away too—but eventually they decide to be together. Nina, Zlata's friend from Kindergarten, 'a sweet, nice girl' is killed. A piece of shrapnel is lodged in her brain and "an innocent eleven-year-old little girl"—becomes—"the victim of a stupid war. I feel sad. I cry and wonder why?"

And in the midst of all this the desire to lead a normal life is so strong, so pronounced that for all those who live in normal circumstances and feel sorry for children and people caught in war zones, Zlata Filipović's entry in her diary on Sunday, July 26, 1992 calls for salutations from deep within the depths of humanity.

She writes, "So far I've read the following books: *Mummy I Love You*, *Little Toto*, *Ringo Star*, *The Twilight of the Geniuses*, *Hajduk in Belgrade*, *Follow Me*, *The Secret*

Diary of Adrian Mole. Nice!..."

"The neighbourhood community centre is organizing a summer school. I've signed up for English, computer studies and music, but Bojana is just taking computer studies..."

A semblance of normalcy returns for a few days only to make the following days worse. This hide-and-seek goes on till negotiators appear and serious talks follow.

On Thursday, November 19, 1992, Zlata explains the situation to herself thus: "I keep wanting to explain these stupid politics to myself, because it seems to me that politics caused this war, making it our everyday reality. War has crossed out the day and replaced it with horror, and now horrors are unfolding instead of days. It looks to me as though these politics mean Serbs, Croats and Muslims. But they are all people. They are all the same. They all look like people, there's no difference. They all have arms, legs and heads, they walk and talk, but now there's 'something' that wants to make them different.

"Among my girl friends, among our friends, in our

family, there are Serbs and Croats and Muslims. It's a mixed group and I never knew who was a Serb, a Croat or a Muslim. Now politics has started meddling around. It has put on 'S' on Serbs, an 'M' on Muslims and a 'C' on Croats, it wants to separate them. And to do so it has chosen the worst, blackest pencil of all—the pencil of war which spells only misery and death.

"Why is politics making us unhappy, separating us, when we ourselves know who is good and who isn't? We mix with the good, not with the bad. And among the good there are Serbs, Croats and Muslims, just as there are among the bad. I simply don't understand it. Of course, I'm 'young' and politics are conducted by 'grown-ups'. But I think we young would do it better. We certainly wouldn't have chosen war.

"The kids are really playing, which is why us kids are not playing, we are living in fear, we are suffering, we are not enjoying our childhood. **WE ARE CRYING.**"

How can one put it in better words than Zlata's own? How can one choose one entry over the other from this diary? How can one tell another all that

this diary does to the reader—apart from saying ‘read it for yourself’?

If ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ sears your conscience because it is about a young girl discovering her adolescent self while in hiding from a war, a persecution, then ‘Zlata’s Diary’ sings you by its utter desperation. A mere eleven-year-old caught in a war, right in her home, a war not of her making and no escape in sight. The bewildering reality of the cruelty of unrest and terrorism of the nineties, weighs you down by its sheer pointlessness. And Zlata could have done no better service to humanity than to document her feelings, her bewilderment, her utter confusion in her own words, against the backdrop of a day-to-day happening in a war situation.

Zlata’s plight of course through the sheer poetry of her agonising entries in this diary, was brought to light by a foreign woman journalist, covering the war in Yugoslavia for her paper. Television interviews with Zlata (of which Zlata herself gives a telling account in the diary) brought her story to millions of viewers the world over. The efforts of

the journalist, Ms Janine Di Giovanni, also secured for Zlata and her family an escape from their situation—to Paris, France.

That, of course is not the end of the story, but the mere beginning. ‘Zlata’s Diary’ has served as a keyhole for the whole world into a child’s mind, when war is thrust on innocents. Thousands of Zlatas live on in war-torn regions of the world—thousands more, mingle with the shards of glass, crocks of concrete, mortar and shell fragments like Nina—death being their escape from a cruel world. But is that alone why they were born? To become victims and to die? We all know that the answer is a vehement ‘No’. And we can only thank Zlata for “Keeping her head, when others about her were losing it.” We can only admire Zlata for seeking and cherishing her little “kaleidoscopes of memory”, in a situation that brought out the worst in others. We can only doff our caps to Zlata for using her learning, her caring to share with us the pangs, panic and futility that war signifies. We can only respect Zlata for using the most powerful weapon of

the world—to pen a story of peace when actually writing about war, hatred and senseless destruction.

So for all the wonderful Miliš of this world, who have their hearts in the right places—go get yourself a copy of *Zlata’s Diary*. It is the only book that comes close to being a manual—a bible for today’s children who crave for a peaceful planet Earth.



it's a Laugh

Son: Dad, help me find the lowest common multiple in this problem.

Dad: Haven't they found that yet? They were looking for it when I was in school.

Son (crying): A crab just bit my toe.

Dad: Which one?

Son: How do I know? All crabs look the same to me.

Student: Ma'am, I don't think I deserve a zero for this answer.

Teacher: Neither do I, but it's the least I can give you.

Diner at a restaurant: Will the band play anything I request?

Waiter: Certainly, sir.

Diner: Well, then, please ask them to play chess.

Anu: My teacher was angry because I didn't know where the pyramids were.

Mother: Well, next time try and remember where you put things.

"I went to the dentist this morning."

"Does your tooth hurt still?"

"I don't know; the dentist kept it."

What did the hamburger say to the tomato?

"That's enough of your sauce!"

Woodwork teacher: What are you making, Rahul?

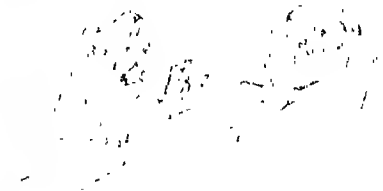
Rahul: A portable, sir.

Woodwork teacher: A portable what?

Rahul: I don't know yet, sir. I've only made the handles.

Interviewer: You are 110 years old. What do you think is the reason for your long life?

Old lady: I suppose it's because I was born such a long time ago.



Arun: How's your sister getting on with her reducing diet?

Karan: Fine, she disappeared last week.



Lady at a modern art museum: This, I suppose, is one of those ugly works that represents modern art.

Attendant: No, ma'am, that's a mirror.



A man was spreading powder in the middle of the road.

Policeman: What do you think you are doing?

Man: Spreading crocodile powder.

Policeman: But there are no crocodiles here.



Man: Just shows how effective the powder is, doesn't it?



Piano tuner: I've come to tune your piano.

Lady: But I didn't send for you.

Piano tuner: No, your neighbours did.



Lady in an orchard: You've had a good crop this year. What d'you do with all this fruit?

Farmer: We eat what we can and what we can't we can.



Radha: There are several things I can count on.

Meera: What are they?

Radha: My fingers.



What is the difference between unlawful and illegal?

Unlawful is against the law, illegal is a sick bird.



Som (playing the violin): How do you like it?

Brother: You should be on the radio.

Som: You mean I'm good enough for that?

Brother: No, then I could turn your off.



PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the *Children's World* Pen-friends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have pen-friends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends, it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

7890
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Trashigang Jr. High
School
P.O. Trashigang, Bhutan
Pen-friends
Any country

7891
Tashin Javed (11)
c/o S.S. Javed
State Bank of India
Main Branch Gaya
Dist. Gaya, Bihar, India
Music, pen-friendship
Any country

7892
Neha Kapoor (11)
Mahar Regt. Centre
Sangor 470001
M.P., India

Badminton, computers
Switzerland, France

7893
Deki Dema (12)
Dungna Primary School
Chukha Dzongkhag
Bhutan
Reading, singing
UK, Japan

7894
Kezang Youdon (13)
Yadi Primary School
P.O. Monggar, Bhutan
Collecting photographs,
music
Japan, Canada

7895
Sargay Zam (11)
Dungna Primary School
P.O. Phuentsholing

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB ENROLMENT FORM

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(IN BLOCK LETTERS)

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Signature

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Liji Balakrishnan (12)	Jharsuguda 768203	Jangchuk Choden (15)
Vanika, Chemmad	Orissa, India	c/o Rinchen Namgyal
Tirurangadi P.O.	Reading, making friends	Regional Immigration
Malapuram Dist.	Any country	Officer
Kerala	7902	Gelepur, Bhutan
Stamps, music	Manisha Samal (13)	Drawing, pen-friendship
India	d/o Mr. B.N. Samal	Any country
7897	K.S. Refractories Ltd.	7908
Tanu Priya (14)	Jharsuguda 768201	Pranali Goswami (13)
d/o Late D.N. Sharma	Orissa, India	Class VIII, Roll No. 831
Partap Street	Reading, cooking	Don Bosco High School
Ward No. 4, Hamirpur	Any country	Baghchung, Jorhat 785001
Himachal Pradesh, India	7903	Assam, India
Music, reading	Simple Prasad (12)	Reading, painting
Russian Federation, Japan	D-2/111 Janakpuri	Any country
7898	New Delhi 110058, India	7909
Priyanka Gupta (15)	Reading, playing	Parninder Kaur (15)
House No. 2593	Any country	3773/4-B Tri Nagar
Punjabi Basti	7904	Kanhaiya Nagar
Opp. Robin Cinema	Navneetha B. (15)	Delhi 110035, India
Near Clock Tower	Asha Komal	Playing
Subzi Mandi	Sandle Kote Road	Other than India
Delhi 110007, India	H.R. Puram	7910
Painting, singing	Hassan 573201	Sonam Tashi (13)
Any country	Karnataka, India	Zangkhari Primary School
7899	Sports, writing letters	Thuntshi, Bhutan
Arunima (11)	Any country	Archery, travelling
403-C, Pocket II	7905	Japan, China
Mayur Vihar, Phase I	Mary M. Mammen (12)	7911
Delhi 110091, India	12/2 New Beach Road	Rekha Ghallay (16)
Singing, painting	Thiruvannamipur	c/o Binod Medical Store
Any country	Madras 600041	Sibsoo Market, P.O. Sibsoo
7900	Tamil Nadu, India	Bhutan
Mahima Bhatia (14)	Dance, painting	Pen-friendship, reading
B/A-78 Shalimar Bagh	Japan, U S A	Any country
Delhi 110052, India	7906	7912
Music, making friends	Divya Sekar (10)	Chhoki Wangmo (12)
India, Germany	8/50 Gokul Flats	Phongmay Primary School
	6th Avenue, Ashok Nagar	

GIRLS

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| Trashigang
East Bhutan
Dancing, reading
Any country
7913
S. Kavitha (15)
d/o Mr. M.S. Swaminathan
5 A/78, W.E.A., Karol Bagh
New Delhi 110005, India
Dancing, reading
Any country
7914
Arshiya Nagi (12)
B-12/2, Okhla Ind. Area
Phase II, New Delhi 110020
India
Dancing, reading
France, USA
7915
Richa Kulkarni (10)
703 Usha Kunj
30-D, Juhu Tara Road
Bombay 400049, India
Reading, swimming
Sri Lanka, India
7916
Wang Chuk Dolma (12)
d/o Mr. Champa Chhering
Bodh
Near Rest House, Kaza
Village & P.O. Kaza
Dist. Lahaul Spiti
Himachal Pradesh 172114
India
Dancing, gardening
Any country
7917
Rebecca D'Souza (12)
St. Joseph's Convent
Panchgani 412805, Satara
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, stickers
Any country | 7918
Prinku Pereira (12)
St. Joseph's Convent
Panchgani 412805, Satara
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, stickers
Any country
7919
Margi P. Patel (15)
Girdhar Bhawan
Near Navi Pole
Dharmaj 388430
Gujarat, India
Movies, music
Switzerland, Malaysia
7920
Sonali Anand (16)
H.No. 2443, 17-A
H.B. Colony, Faridabad
Haryana, India
Making friends, cooking
USA, India
7921
Moitreyi Nayek (15)
Khurrida, Rajgram
P.O. Kharagpur
Dist. Midnapur
West Bengal, India
Pen-friends, painting
Any country
7922
Linda Ravindran (13)
223 Rupali Park
Irani Road
Dahanu Road P.O.
Thane Dist.
Maharashtra 401602
India
Reading, music
Any country
7923
Kabita Chakraborty (15)
c/o Anup Kumar | Chakraborty
Qr. No. D/103
P.O. Chandrapura
Dist. Bokaro 825303
Bihar, India
Reading, painting
USA, Japan
7924
Ruchita Maru (13)
Balaji Udyog
B-84, Indraprasth
Industrial Area
Kota 324005
Rajasthan, India
Stamps, pen-friendship
Any country
7925
Indu Linggi (10)
c/o Principal
V.K.V. (Roing)
Dist. Oirang Valley 792110
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Singing, making friends
Any country
7926
Timita Singkai (14)
c/o Mr. C.K. Singkai
P.O. Namsai Tinali
Near Greenwood School
Dist. Lohit
Arunachal Pradesh 792103
India
Reading, music
Any country
7927
Reeva Gujral (11)
c/o Mr. Sunil Gujral
64/4 Race Course
Dehra Dun
Uttar Pradesh
India
Stamps, reading
Any country |
|---|--|---|

BOYS

7928	Making friends, dancing	School
Laiju C. Philip (15)	Any country	Kalaktang, P.O. Kalaktang
Prasad House (2904)		Dist. West Kameng 790002
Sainik School P.O.	7933	Arunachal Pradesh, India
Thiruvananthapuram	Sanjeev Kharge (16)	Music, playing
Kerala, India	Near Post Office	Japan, Bhutan
Reading, swimming	Patel Colony, H.No. 371/2	
Any country	Sambra	7938
7929	Belgaum, Karnataka	Raj (16)
Swithin S. (13)	Kabaddi, reading	Class XI
House No. 21, O.D. Block	India	c/o Principal, Govt. Hr.
Kesere, Rajendra Nagar	7934	Secondary School
Mysore, Karnataka	Rohit Bhardwaj (15)	Kalaktang, P.O. Kalaktang
India	c/o Tarun Upadhyay	Dist. West Kameng 790002
Playing the piano, stamps	B-10 Jwalamukhi Hostel	Arunachal Pradesh, India
USA	I.I.T. Hauz Khas	Movies, riding
7930	New Delhi 1100016	Bhutan, Japan
Akhilesh Gaharwar (14)	Playing the guitar, pen-	7939
c/o K.K. Gahawar	friendship	Tashi (16)
A/B-7, Rudraksh	India	Class X
Apartment	7935	c/o Principal, Govt. Hr. Sec.
B/H Kailash Dham Dairy	Mahaveer Prasad Jat (16)	School
Nehru Park	s/o Shree Khinwa Ram	Kalaktang, P.O. Kalaktang
Management Enclave Road	V.P.O. Jandawa	Dist. West Kameng 790002
Vastrapur	Via. Ratnagarh 331022	Arunachal Pradesh, India
Ahmedabad 380015	Dt. Churu	Playing, movies
Gujarat, India	Rajasthan, India	Bhutan, USA
Stamps and coins, skating	Western music, reading	7940
Any country	Malaysia, Singapore	K.G. Prashanth (15)
7931	7936	s/o Mr. K.R. Gopalakrishna
Sankalan Saha (13)	Biju Balakrishna (15)	Prashantha Nilayam
s/o Dr. S.C. Saha	Type C-52/8 B.A.R.C.	3rd Cross, S.N. Peet
Guriahati Road	Colony	Bellary 583103
Cooch Behar 736101	P.O. TAPP, Tarapur	Karnataka, India
West Bengal, India	Maharashtra 401504	Stamps and coins
Swimming, gardening	India	Any country
Other than India	Stamps, reading	7941
7932	France, USA	Nabajit Kalita (16)
Deepak Solanki (16)	7937	Udaygiri House (2808)
D-45 DDA Flats	Tashi Tsering (16)	Sainik School, Goalpara
New Ranjeet Nagar	Class X	P.O. Rajapara 783133
Near Satyam Cinema	c/o Principal	Assam, India
New Delhi 110008, India	Govt. Higher Secondary	Pen-friendship, stamps
		Any country

BOYS

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 7942
Ankur Varshneya (13)
C-22, IFFCO, Uday Nagar
Gandhidham 370203
Kutch
Gujarat, India
Reading
Any country | Stamps, reading
Any country
7947
Gaurav Sehgal (14)
A-5/B, 198 SFS Flats
Paschim Vihar
New Delhi 110063, India
Photography, coins
Any country | 7952
Sumit Budhwar (12)
s/o Shri Jagwal Singh
Vill & P.O. Sunari Kalan
Dist. Rohtak 124001
Haryana, India
Reading, movies
UK, Japan |
| 7943
Arnab Mukherjee (15)
Near Baradwari Flats
SF 3/12 Sakchi
Jamshedpur 831001
Bihar, India
Singing, chess
Germany | 7948
Harsha Kumar (16)
Madathil Vilakom
Kizhuvilam (Via)
Oorupoika P.O.
Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala 695104, India
Reading, games
Any country | 7953
Rumaan Kidwai (16)
621 Welham Boy's School
5 Circular Road
Dehra Dun 248001, U.P.
India
Swimming, boxing
USA, UK |
| 7944
Dipendra Pradhan (14)
Roll No. 3250, Tagore
House
Bangalore Military School
Post Box No. 2500
Bangalore 560025
Karnataka, India
Reading, music
Any country | 7949
Asha Singh (16)
s/o Ram Karan
VPO Halalpur
Dist. Sonapat
Haryana 131001, India
Computer games, reading
Any country | 7954
Tashi Lekdon (14)
c/o Postmaster
P.O. Thrimshing
Trashigang, Bhutan
Reading, sports
Japan, China |
| 7945
Shreyans Jain (16)
M/s Manoj Textiles
3 Devendrapuram
2nd Street
Salem, Tamil Nadu, India
Painting, pen-friends
India, Japan | 7950
Navin Nayanar (16)
Aravalli House (SS)
The Lawrence School
Ooty 643008, Nilgiris
Tamil Nadu, India
Music, taekwondo
Any country | 7955
Gobind Khandelia (13)
H.No. 1321, Sec. 19-B
Chandigarh 160019, India
Stamps, making friends
Any country |
| 7946
B. Prabhu (14)
13 Narayana Gounder
Street
(NGR Road)
Pap Panaicken Palayam
Coimbatore 641037
Tamil Nadu, India | 7951
Sandeep Kumar (15)
Govt. Hr. Sec. School
Kalaktang 790002
West Kameng
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Chess, reading
Japan, UK | 7956
Subhrajit Kumar (16)
Qr. No. L 4/34, Cross Road
No. 16, Agrico
Jamshedpur 831009
Bihar, India
Chess, making an
aquarium
Any country |
| | | 7957
P.M. Kiran (14)
s/o Mr. P.J. Kantharaj
Rly. Guard, STPM Colony |

BOYS

Qrts. No. 47/B Vijayawada 520011 Andhra Pradesh, India Stamps and currency, music Any country	P.O. Kalaktang Dist. West Kameng 790002 Arunachal Pradesh, India Music, reading Japan, Australia 7963 Proshanto Roy (16) c/o Provat Kumar Roy c/o Nibaran Pall P.O. Kharagpur Subashespally Dist. Midnapur 721301 West Bengal, India Pen-friends, reading Any country	7967 Thinley Paljor (16) Chukha High School Class VIII P/O Tshimakhoti • Bhutan Reading, music Nepal, India 7968 Nina Tshering (16) Chukha High School Class IX C P/O Tshimalakha, Bhutan Basketball, pen-friends Japan, India
7958 Ravi Gurung (15) c/o Tila Gurung N/A Kalaktang P.O. Kalaktang Dist. West Kameng 790002 Arunachal Pradesh, India Singing, cricket Bhutan, U.S.A.	7964 A. Prabhakaran (10) 536, 9th Block Jayanagar Corporation Colony Bangalore 560069 Karnataka, India Cricket, drawing Any country	7969 Sushil Bakshi (14) C.L. Bakshi c/o Mr. O.P. Sharma H.No. 33, Street No. 16 Rajpura Jammu 180001, India Reading, Video games
7959 Doli Basar (12) V.K.V. Balijan Dist. Papumpare Arunachal Pradesh, India Sports, music Bhutan, Japan	7965 Sonit Kumar Gogoi (15) c/o N.C. Gogoi Pilot Plant, R.R.L. Jorhat 785006 Assam, India Tennis, quiz Any country	7970 M. Sriram (13) c/o Mr. M. Sundar Ram Bungalow No. 1004 Railway Quarters South Lallaguda Secunderabad 500017 Andhra Pradesh Swimming, reading India
7960 Nitin Gupta (14) H.No. 1388/8 Faridabad Haryana, India Making friends, reading India	7966 Naveen J. (14) Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala Yadavgiri Mysore 570020 Karnataka, India Swimming, music Any country	7971 Gokarna Monger (14) Tomiyangsa Primary School Dist. Tashiryangtse P/O Duksum, East Bhutan Football, dancing Any country
7961 Ramesh (15) SE-51 Singalpur (Near water tank) Shalimar Bagh Delhi 110052, India Cricket, hockey Japan, India		
7962 Nima Norbu Kharm (16) Govt. Hr. Sec. School Class IX, Kalaktang		



Chug Chugging Along

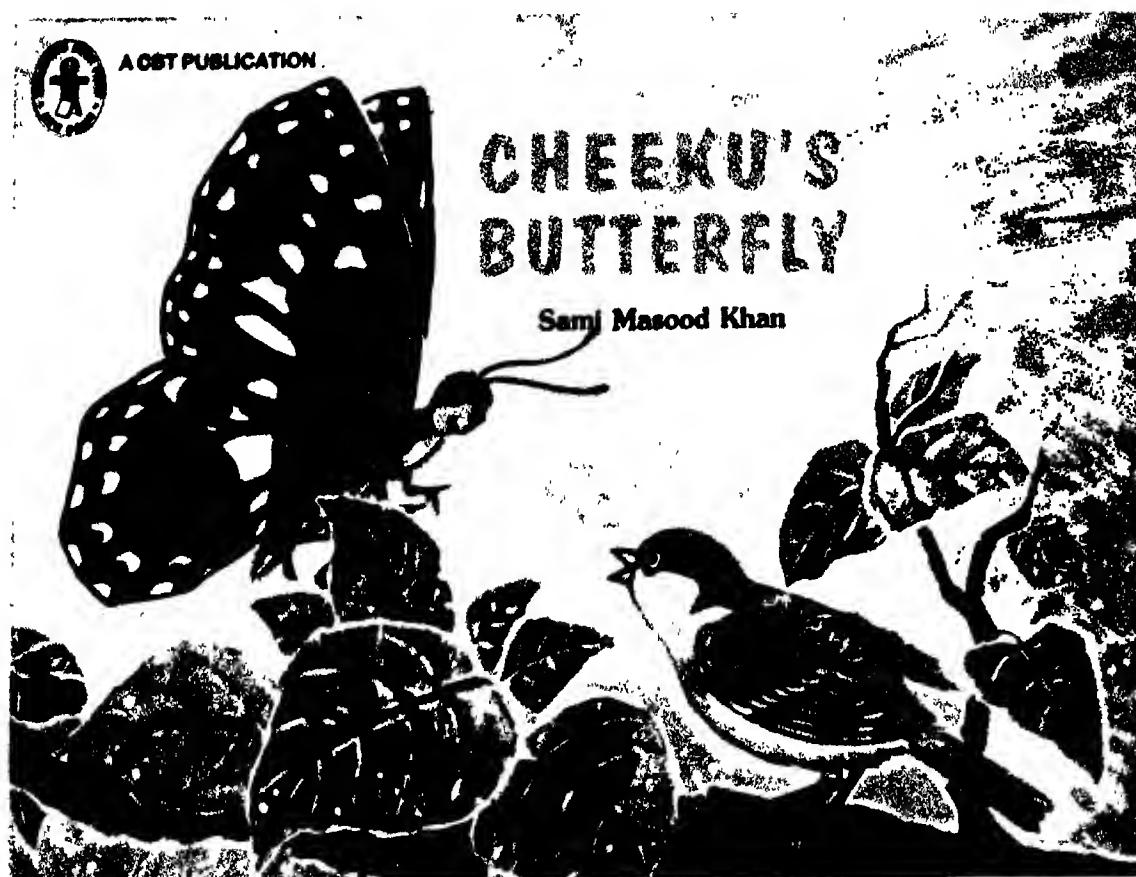
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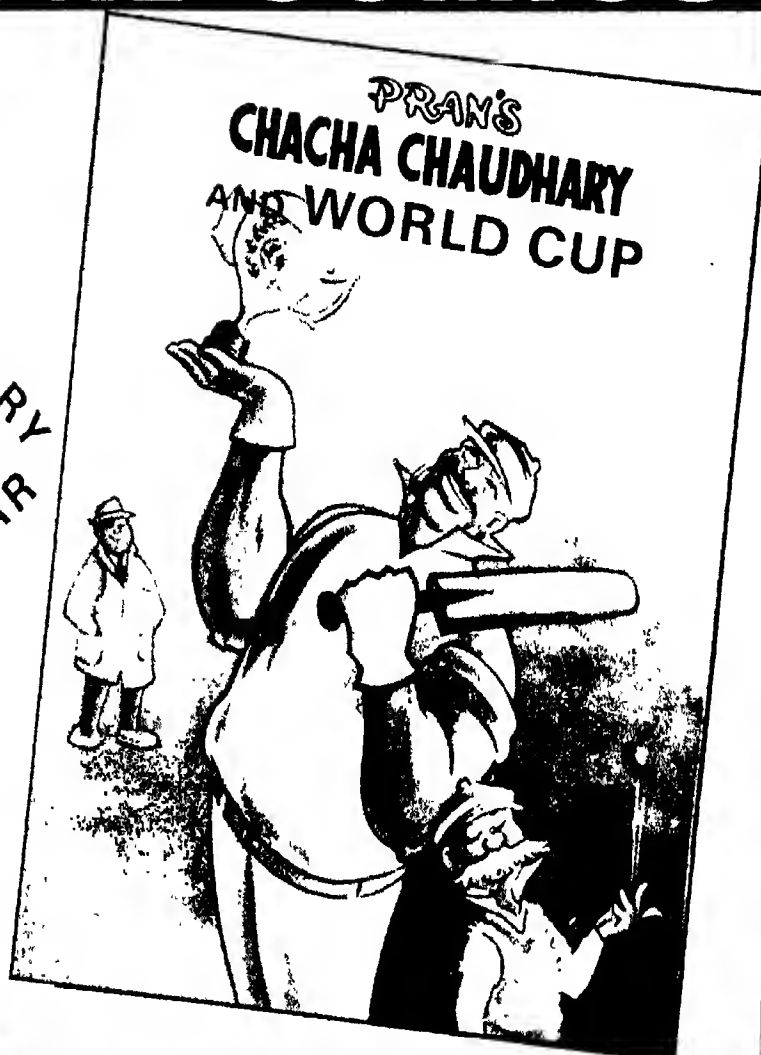
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MARCH 1996
Vol. XXVIII
No. 12

GETTING TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS

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Kuheli Sen

'DOL' TOO IS HOLI

Dipavali Debroy

TIMES AND TRENDS

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O.P. Bhagat

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Smallest, largest, tallest...

Thangamani

CROSSROADS 3

Personally Yours

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I WILL BE THERE

Story

Thangamani

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OF BLUE JAYS AND MOCKINGBIRDS

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Sudha Sanjeev

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CROCODILE TEARS

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Pranav Trivedi

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CHILDREN'S WORLD

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Dear Readers,

As we go to Press, booklovers are having a veritable feast at the book fairs on at the moment in New Delhi and Calcutta. If the crowds at these fairs are any indication then it will be far from the truth to say that the electronic media is ruling our lives, all but killing the habit of reading. Old, young, men, women, children are thronging the stalls at the book fairs, not only poring over and browsing through books but also buying them. It is a heartening sight and that is the truth.

Reading, as we all well know, expands our vistas of knowledge, making it that much easier to answer questions, hold forth on a variety of subjects... even fill in crosswords. The response to our crosswords has been

encouraging even as we progress to not-so-simple ones. Not everyone can win, of course, but the fun is in trying, isn't it?

There are friends and friends as our stories in this issue tell you but none like a book as any bookworm would endorse. Friendship between the inanimate and friendship between flesh and blood figures, one providing succour to the other in an hour of need is the content of the stories.

Cricket enthusiasts among you must be getting ready to watch the World Cup. As discussions and debates on the finer points of somebody's batting and another's bowling continue along with keeping track of scores and records, the question that arises is, will we or won't we win the Cup? All the best, India, and all of you too who are beaver-ing away

at your books for final examinations—faced with far less enthusiasm than watching Sachin Tendulkar lift a difficult ball to the boundary. Naturally.

More on the present issue. Our lead story this month might provoke you to think about a child's rights and privileges. We also carry book reviews, 'Book Choice' featuring a wonderful book, comics, crossword, pen-friends, the lot. Write to us if there is anything else you would like to see included in these pages.

The next issue is a special one—not only because it has more pages, also because it will feature stories written specifically for you. So while you await that, we get crack-ing on it, bringing you, among other things, an important announcement. All that and more next month.



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Getting to Know Their Rights

A report by Kuheli Sen

Photographs courtesy: CASP-PLAN

JANUARY 9, 1996 dawned a misty winter morning. As the sun rose and birds chirped, children made ready to go to schools. Another routine day? It was not so for the sixty children from the slums of Govindpuri and Sangam Vihar. They were participating in a five-day workshop organized by CASP-PLAN and UJJWAL at the convention centre, Hamdard University.

CASP (Community Aid and Sponsorship Programme) and PLAN international, a national and international organization came together to undertake the developmental project through sponsorship.

UJJWAL is a registered society committed to the cause of the socially disadvantaged by narrowing educational dispari-

ties. The two organizations came together to further their common goal through this novel workshop. 'The objective,' it proclaims, 'is to make the disadvantaged sections of society aware of Children's Rights.' The sixty participants will be the 'messengers' to communicate the rights to the society at large and 'above all to the policy and decision makers at the government level'.

A unique workshop it

was too, in which the children articulated their idea of rights for a child. Their thoughts found expression through the creative media of painting, writing and theatre. The children agreed in one voice that they came to know of the concept of a child and its rights for the first time.

The first day was devoted to discussion and interaction between the children and the resource persons. Ms Renu Ghosh,



of the UNICEF, and Mr. Praveen Sharma, of 'Butterflies', conducted the informal opening session. For a change there were no formal speeches, and the fun the children were having showed on their faces. When asked to define a 'child' many surprising answers were to be heard.

"Anyone who isn't bearded is a child," said someone. "One who is not married," said another. The assertion of little Dharmendra created ripples of laughter, "*Jo roz ek kilo dudh pi jaata hai* (one who drinks 1 litre milk everyday)." Soon their views were rectified when they were told that anyone below eighteen years of age is a child. A few remained unconvinced still, though they were ready to make concessions upto twelve years, for a child.

They were then invited to voice their thoughts and feelings related to their rights. Six-year-old Dharmendra gave a very poignant speech when he talked about the difference between the rich and poor girl child. That while one went to school and enjoyed playing in a well-kept park, the other took, on her frail shoulders, full



charge of household duties seemed to have affected him much. He appealed to the well-off to help the poverty stricken and better their lot thereby. A girl spoke of the right to education which is often denied to the children of the poor because of various personal and social constraints. All the children were eager to go to school and study to achieve better things in life.

Ms Ghosh and Mr. Sharma then informed them of the two kinds of rights. One is the survival right, under which falls the right to water, nutrition and proper health care without which humans cannot survive. The right to education and play fall in the other category. Unfortunately in our country

distinction is often made between the male and the female child, both in terms of food and nutrition as well as the availability of opportunities to them.

It was emphasized that every child has an equal right to enough food, water and proper health care which is required for the full growth of the body and mind. It is also their right to seek and pursue education upto any level that they wish for as is their right to play which is essential for growth. As the saying verily implies, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.'

"UNICEF supports the efforts of the NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in their work for the needy children," said Ms Ghosh, Mr. S.R. Apte (executive director, CASP) calls it a core group, which

is to be further built up through such workshops. 'The participants,' he says, 'are from economically backward classes of urban areas and the purpose of this workshop is to role-play.'

A few participants spoke of some of the common problems faced by them in their locality, specially of the non-availability of enough water. They also spoke of the discrimination made within the family between brothers and sisters. At about 12 o'clock the tea-break was announced with the promise of film shows after it. All the children made to rush towards the door but when reminded that rights have to be accompanied by duties too, they went out in a disciplined manner.

Some of the children were then interviewed by



the TV company covering the event. They voiced their feelings and confidently faced the camera. The session was soon resumed with the screening of two animation films. The first film shed light on the fact that girls are trained for household duties basically in unenlightened families. The story revolves round the lives of a little girl, Meena, her brother Raju and their parents. The star characters were

undoubtedly Meena and her pet parrot, Mitthu. In her eagerness to learn, Meena dispatches Mitthu to the village school with Raju. So Meena learns mathematics by proxy from her enterprising pet. This enables her to react with alacrity when a thief tries to steal their hen. She immediately springs to action when she counts one less from the flock. Everyone praises Meena and commends her parents for sending her to school. This finally makes them realize that education is essential for all.

The second film dealt with the right to equal nourishment. The mother, it is shown, discriminates between Raju and Meena, saying men need extra food for their growth. Raju agrees with his mother saying Meena's duties are easier than the tasks he



handles. Therefore it is natural that he should get more to eat. Meena then puts forth the wise suggestion of interchanging their duties for a day, the next day being a holiday. The participating children thoroughly enjoy the moments of mirth provided by Mitthu's pranks.

Both Raju and Meena face a lot of hardship through their role reversal and get very tired by the end of the day. Accordingly Meena gets more food than Raju, but then Raju recounts the arduous tasks he has completed and asks for more food. This makes the mother and grandmother see light and realize no work is easy. Both the children get an equal amount of food from then onwards.

The children were then asked what lessons they learnt from the two stories. It is clear from their reactions that the audio-visual media had helped to communicate the message easily.

The participants were divided into five groups. Each group was given one right as a theme to role-play. The enthusiastic children hurried out under the guidance of a leader to rehearse their themes. They returned to enact

their themes one by one. The five main rights mentioned earlier served as a pivot around which the stories revolved.

It was heartening to see so much talent coming to light with the right inputs. The role-playing also helped others to recognize and understand their problems from the children's perspective. That a bucket of water, meant standing in a queue for hours on end and could lead to strife was ably displayed by the child artists.

Later Arti and Kusum also spoke of this problem in their locality. "Many people try to take water out of turn and this leads to quarrels," they said. When asked what measures they would undertake, now that they knew about their rights, to handle such problems, Arti (12) said,

"*Samjhayenge* (we will persuade them)."

The short skit on health focused on the reliance on *ojhas* (miracle men). The reason behind this might be, as Subhash pointed out, that the free government dispensary does not take proper care of patients. This coupled with poverty and illiteracy drives them to *ojhas*. The children also shed light on the need to educate children to better their future. Ten-year-old Anita, who has not attended any school as yet, spoke of her willingness and resolved, "*Is bari dakhila lenge* (I will enrol this session)." Baleshnath, 11, who helps his father in their snakecharmer's profession and handles 12-14 snakes daily, said that he was determined to educate himself. Kusum, a student of Std 8, said everyone has the right to





education, "*Jahan tak padhna chahe* (upto the level they desire)."

The theme 'play' generated a lot of interest amongst the children, as the outcome demonstrated. The participants later ruefully spoke of the lack of proper parks in their area. Rohit, a resident of Govindpuri, said, "*Khelne ke liye jagah hi nahin hai* (there's no place at all to play)."

At the end of the first day, Mr. Praveen allotted some homework to the children. They were to discuss the rights with their families and note down the views. The organizers had arranged for the children to be picked up from a point and dropped there in the afternoon daily.

Bhagyashri Dengle of the CASP-PLAN project, giving an insight to their

organization, said that they have also organized adventure and nature camps in the past, in which about 2000 children have participated. Many of the participants in this workshop belong to the Scouts and Guides cadres. They talk with expectation and eagerness about their forthcoming scout camp in Dalhousie.

The second day started with a warm-up session which brushed up the issues discussed in the opening session. An animation film on AIDS was then screened. It was followed by an exciting trip through the dream world of artistic endeavours. Led by the able resource team of the artist couple Prasanta and Ela Mukherjee, the children experimented with paintings, posters, collage and other methods.

They were told to refrain from drawing mountains and rivers; instead they took up themes from everyday life. The focus was, of course, on the five rights of children. They were provided with paper, oil pastels and specially prepared water colours.

The works of art which were displayed on the following day showed a surprising mixture of realism and surrealism. The participants in their talk revealed that they enjoyed working with different mediums and their works speak for themselves. While one shows the head of the Prime Minister attached to a small body standing beside a well, another has a well-known fashion model working hard to complete daily chores!

The third day was devoted to creative writing and imaginative fecundity. Guided by Anuradha Marwah Roy, a professor of English at the Delhi University, the children strove to express their feelings through words.

The day was divided into three parts. The participants were first given two sentences by the resource person and

each child had to add 2-3 sentences to it to take the story forward. That they were much affected by popular Hindi cinema was soon obvious, for what began in a school interestingly developed into a story of heroism and bravery! In the second part they were asked to give titles to each artwork that was displayed.

Finally they were shown a film on literacy and one scene was given to each group to build into a story. The five themes were: *Aasman se ek ki'taab udhti hui aai* (a book came flying from the skies), *Kitaben jal rahi thi* (books were burning), *Dadima aur poti* (grandmother and granddaughter), *Munim, sahuکار aur kisan* (agent, money-lender and peasant) and *Auraten ro rahi thi* (women were crying).

The five groups submitted fine, intricately-woven stories on these themes. Ten-year-old Sooraj enjoyed letting his imagination stretch out towards the heights as, he said, they do not perform such activities in school.

The fourth and the fifth day were both devoted to theatre. The resource person for this emotive experience was Urmila

Jain, an active theatre personality, aided by her team of three helpers. Of the participants some had taken part in street plays before. The five rights theme was interwoven to form a cohesive story.

The first of this two-day theatre workshop was spent rehearsing the plays. The five groups, of twelve children each, brushed up their performances, but first they buried themselves in the marvellous experience of Origami. The word 'Origami', according to the Oxford dictionary, means 'the Japanese art of folding paper intricately into decorative shapes'. It requires both dexterity of hands and nimble fingers. They made colourful flowers and stars, these were to be later used as stage props too. Pradeep enjoyed creating beautiful things out of paper.

Kamlesh, who aspires to a singing career and has been inspired by Lata Mangeshkar and Mukesh since childhood, described the experience as very instructive. Babita belongs to the snakecharmers' clan and wants to become a dance director in future. She said she is an admirer of the popular film actress, Madhuri Dixit.

The fifth and final day started with a lot of expectations. The participants were to present their efforts to visitors later in the day. Therefore, hectic preparations were on. It was staged soon after the tea-break.

Children holding colourful *dupattas* walked to the beats of the *dholak*. From afar it seemed as if the *dupattas* were walking themselves. One came to a stop in the front. Arti and Dharmendra peeped out



from behind to speak about their activities in the workshop. The play that followed highlighted the five basic rights of children. The interludes were enlivened by the steady beat of the *dholak* and songs by the chorus. The ending was apt with a song, *hum sab chhote chhote bachche* (we are small children), that summarised the needs of children. They sang of their need to be loved and the refrain *humko sabka pyar chahiye* (we need to be loved by everyone) was repeated.

The atmosphere was one of ease with the participants and audience, talking and appreciating enthusiastically. As a grand finale the participants were asked to present extempore performances. This yielded interesting results varying from singing of patriotic songs (*mandir, masjid, gurdwara*) to copying the Indian Michael Jackson, Prabhu Deva.

What is the meaning of 'rights', Dharmendra was asked. "*Woh jo kisise chhina jaata hai* (that which is snatched)," he said. He, as well as many other children, displayed an admirable patriotic

feeling. Their ambition is to join the armed forces to curb terrorist activities. Rakesh Singh wants to join the navy while Rohit and Kuldeep both want to be police officers to help nab criminals. Mohammad Sarfaraz or Sonu aspires to be a doctor, Rajkumar has likewise chosen the medical profession as he can then cure diseases and help bring joy to people. Amit Kumar, a topper, studying in Std. 6, has decided to opt for a teaching career.

The workshop, felt the participants, had taught them many new things. Affirming this, Savita spoke of their ignorance about a child's rights and how the knowledge would help them in the future. Suresh (12) was affected by polio in his childhood and lost the use of a limb as a consequence. He rues that his parents did not know about health care, and says such workshops would help spread awareness and a new perception amongst people.

The children were given a packet of gifts comprising educative books, maps and colour pens in the concluding sessions.

Mrs. Anjana Batra (President, Ujjwal) is very

satisfied with the outcome of the workshop which was organized at a short notice. She commends the work of the resource persons and the results they have achieved.

Manila Chodhury (Programme Coordinator, CASP-PLAN) says this workshop gave the children confidence and the power of self-decision. It is to be followed by another of its kind with the same group of participants soon she promises.

Though the children were sad to see the end of an activity that has been a novel experience for them, they were happy to have been part of it.

Clearly what they enjoyed most, as Kamlesh and Manju said, is the total freedom of speech and action. This encouraged them to voice their feelings without the fear of being snubbed. The hope of a better world shone in their eyes and the confidence to demand what was their right lightened their spirits.



Holi

Text: Dipavali Debroy

Illustrations: Bejoy

HOLI IS celebrated throughout the length and breadth of India, but there are some local variations.

The word itself is derived from the Sanskrit *Holaka*, *Holika* or *Holi*. It covers the spring festival celebrated at the approach of spring, during the three or four days preceding the full moon in the month of *Falgun*.

The *gubbara* (balloon) filled with water that is flung at pedestrians (usually from the safer heights of balconies and housetops) in North India is hardly used in the Eastern parts.

The word itself—*Holi*—is not popular there. Bengalis use the word *Dol* instead.

In the town of Burdwan in West Bengal, the festival is held with great

enthusiasm many years ago, one of the *Maharajas* of Burdwan had ordered that this be done, and the townsmen have stuck to the tradition.

While buckets and *pichkaris* (sprays or sprinklers) are such an integral part of *Holi*

everywhere else, the university town of Santiniketan, in the district of Birbhum in West Bengal, observes more or less a dry *Holi*. It is *phag* or *abir* (powdered colour) which is used, rather than any kind of liquid. There are certain unwritten rules of application as well. A student or any younger person anoints the feet of the teacher or the elder person with the powder. The teacher or the elder in return, sprinkles a little powder on the head bowed at his or her feet. Any breach of this code of conduct is almost an act of indiscipline.

What is more, Santiniketan celebrates *Holi* or *Dol*, but gives it an entirely different name, namely, *Basantotsava* or Spring Festival. The



students and the staff of the university dress up in red and yellow and bedeck themselves with flowers.

Dancing to songs by Tagore, they approach the *amrakunja* or mango-grove and it is then that the air grows pink and red and green with coloured powder flung all around. This ceremony has been attracting a lot of tourists—ranging from locals of the neighbouring town of Bolpur to Non-Resident Indians.

On the day of the festival, the air is filled with the sound of laughter and the sight of people

ness. Senior residents of Santiniketan feel that *Basantotsava* there is losing much of its charm.

However, the basic message of Holi, *Dol* or *Basantotsava* can never lose its significance. As Tagore had put it, it is a message for 'opening up', of mixing with people, for breaking down barriers.

Here is a free translation:

"Open up, those who are within the confines of the household. Dol has started.

It is everywhere on earth, on the

thick of the forest.

The Ashoka and Palasha trees are piled up with heaps of red laughter.

A red addiction is mixed in the clouds in the morning sky. Winds of change are waving through the new leaves. Come now, those who are within the confines of the house, throw open your doors."

This message is universal. When you say 'Happy Holi', it is this message that you are trying to get across.



Aya re khilonewala, aya...

SO SINGS the toyseller. As they hear his song, children come running and gather round him.

You can imagine this anywhere and in any age. Whether it was Patliputra or Vijayanagar or Agra of the Mughal days, the toyseller was one vendor boys and girls waited for and rushed to.

later playthings down the centuries. Even today some of our toys are like them.

As the years passed, men made better and newer things. They made better and newer toys too. Clay and wood were still used. But the toymakers also made use of stone, metals and other materials.

Many stone and metal toys of those days have come down to us. Also

In India the dress varies a little or more from region to region. So we have dolls in *saris*, *salwar* suits, *ghaghras*, Manipuri skirts and other outfits.

As it is with dolls, so is it with doll's houses. The furniture and decorations in them show the kinds of things the people of the land have in their homes or bedrooms.

Among the wooden toys

Toyland

Times AND Trends

Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

We saw the first playthings at Mohenjo-daro. Most of them were of baked clay. The toymakers then might have used wood as well. But wood decays with the years, and no such toys have been found.

Though simple, the Mohenjo-daro finds take pride of place in our toys. They served as models for

some other carefully kept toys. We get some idea of them through painting, sculpture and stories as well. Many of those toys can be seen in museums.

The toys of any land reflect its life. An English doll is dressed like a rosy-cheeked English child or a young lady. A Japanese doll usually comes in the country's traditional costume.

from Kashmir are miniature *shikaras* and houseboats. Why? Because these two are a common sight on the Valley's lakes.

Even the tiny kitchen things girls play with speak of the place. If a European or American girl has little tea sets, frying pans, jugs, forks and knives, an Indian girl has *thalis*, *katoris*, *gagars* and *tawis*.



The toys also tell something of the period they belong to. A modern doll looks quite different from a Victorian or a medieval doll.

Rajasthani puppets are dressed colourfully like the people of the state. And they dance just like the folk dancers. Or the turbaned ones fight and brandish swords like the folk heroes.

Of late, through cinema and TV, disco and other mod dances have made inroads everywhere. So a puppet, dancing in a king's court, may, for a moment tickle the audience by moving or swinging like a disco or rock dancer.

When an epic like the *Ramayana* is staged in a puppet theatre, the costumes the characters wear give you some glimpses of the age of heroes.

You must have read of the knights. That was in the Middle Ages in Europe. English children in those days had dolls that looked like the chivalrous knights.

Those were also the days of windmills. So the children had toy windmills to play with.

The Crusades—religious wars—were also fought around that time.



Like the knights that gallantly rode forth, the dolls also represented the brave men in mail and on horseback.

Queen Victoria loved dolls. She had a good collection of them. Some were named after the ladies of the court, and some others after famous actresses. She even did needlework for them.

Have you read the poem, "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod"? It was written by the American poet and journalist, Eugene Field. He was another collector of dolls.

Cartoonist Shankar Pillai collected many dolls from various countries. Now they, with others that were gifted to the Museum, make up the Inter-

national Dolls Museum in New Delhi.

Toymaking became an industry pretty long back. But it was not as it is today. The boost came with the industrial age. Now a lot of work is done in factories and by machines.

The new age also gave the toymakers new ideas. Toy carts and carriages

had long been common. When trains, cars, buses and trucks were invented, toy trains, cars, buses and trucks also came to be made.

And toy steamboats, aeroplanes and helicopters. Then toy rockets and satellites.

The dolls too changed. They squeaked and closed their eyes when put to sleep. New dolls had new doll's houses.

All this while, through road, rail, sea and air, the distant lands came closer. This increased imports and exports. Among other things, toys were also bought from or sent to other countries.

Every country makes its toys. But some do more, and some less. Some make a lot more and export them. Japan, for example. Even the much smaller Hongkong sells toys, among others, to the USA.

America had been making toys for a long time. Yet it bought some from elsewhere. This was partly from need, and partly for their novelty.

During the First World War the supply of toys from Europe stopped. So America began to make more toys. Now it has a big toy industry. Still it

gets some playthings from abroad.

We make lots of toys. But they are mostly folk or traditional toys. And they are mostly made of clay, wood, bamboo, grass, even coconut shells and fibres.

For that reason they are quite cheap. But there are expensive toys of wood too. Most of the stone and metal playthings also cost quite a bit.

Bankura is among the places known for their clay toys. Kondapalli is famous for its toys of soft wood.

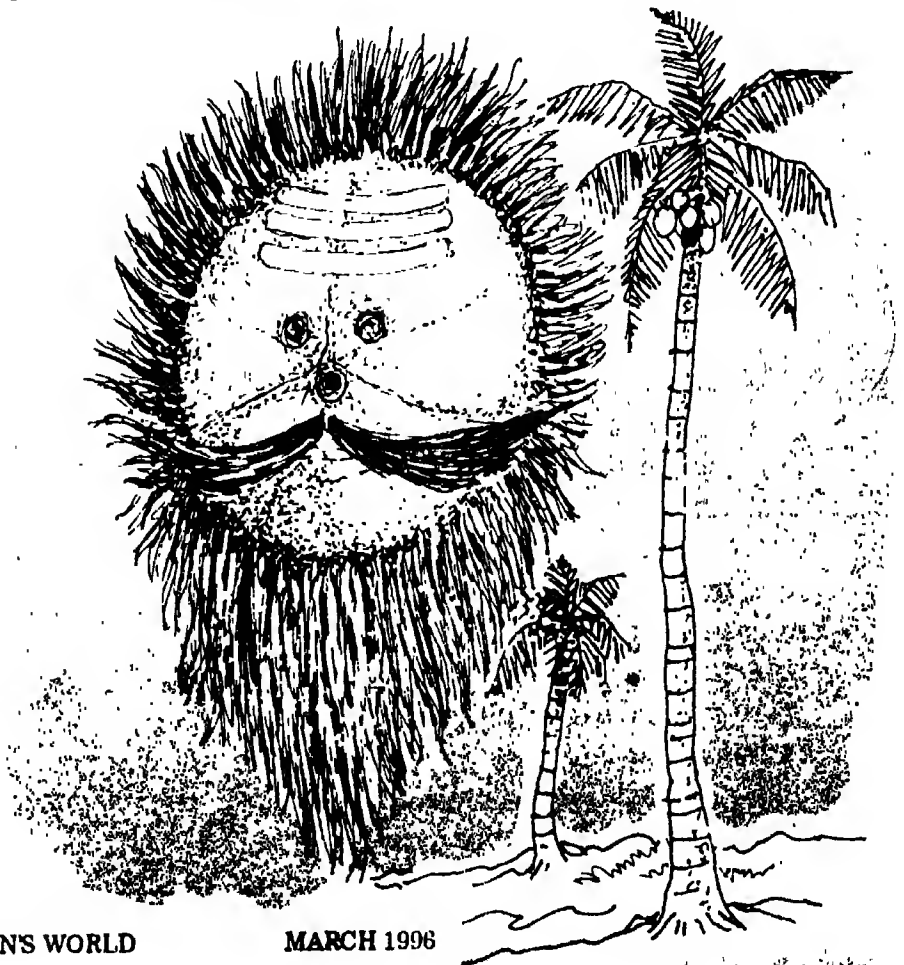
But the use of tin and plastic in India's

toymaking industry is new. Some Indian toymakers have tied up with foreign manufacturers. So many modern toys are being manufactured.

As they cost more, these toys are for the rich. It is these toys which are advertised in the papers. This is one more reason that makes their prices so high.

Surveys show that in Europe and America parents spend more on the toys and games for their children. This also means that they buy for them any new toy that comes on the market.

From time to time, new



materials for making toys have been added to those already in use. In our own times there have been at least two new additions. One is rubber, and the other plastic.

Rubber balls were once common. Also hollow rubber dolls, birds and animals which made a whistling sound when you squeezed them. And rubber dolls and animals that could be inflated.

And wavy snakes about half a metre long. For fun or by way of a prank, some children pressed them down in a handy tin and put the lid on. Then they asked someone to open the tin for them.

As the person did so, out sprang the snake and, to the amusement of all, startled, even scared, him or her.

But rubber has almost been ousted by plastic. Now it is the commonest toy material.

If there is soft plastic, there is hard plastic too. Either can be moulded into any shape. It can be given all kinds of tints. Its light weight is another plus point.

Most of the mechanical toys are made of plastic. Plastic has even replaced the feathers in shuttle-



cocks. And the fibres in the ropes for skipping and swinging.

New toys are still being added to the numerous old ones. Only some years back Barbie created a sensation everywhere. Since then the doll has

appeared in many new styles.

A recent science fiction film that drew packed houses was *Jurassic Park*. It generated a new interest in dinosaurs.

Now we have toy dinosaurs too.



ALERTER

Dear Mondays and Muddle-days,

Does it always have to happen on Mondays? Do Mondays have to be so muddled, so muddied, so muddled up? And does my brother have to be around on Mondays? Or on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays? Couldn't he be banished on these days of the week and be brought back on some other days? Couldn't he?

But this Monday was certainly the worst in recent memory. The very worst. First of all, the milkman came late be-

cause he said his cow had overslept and his bicycle lost its keys. Or something. Then the bread became irritated and became dark, burnt toast. Then my shoelaces which had travelled overnight, did not return. And after that got settled, I found I did not have a hanky.

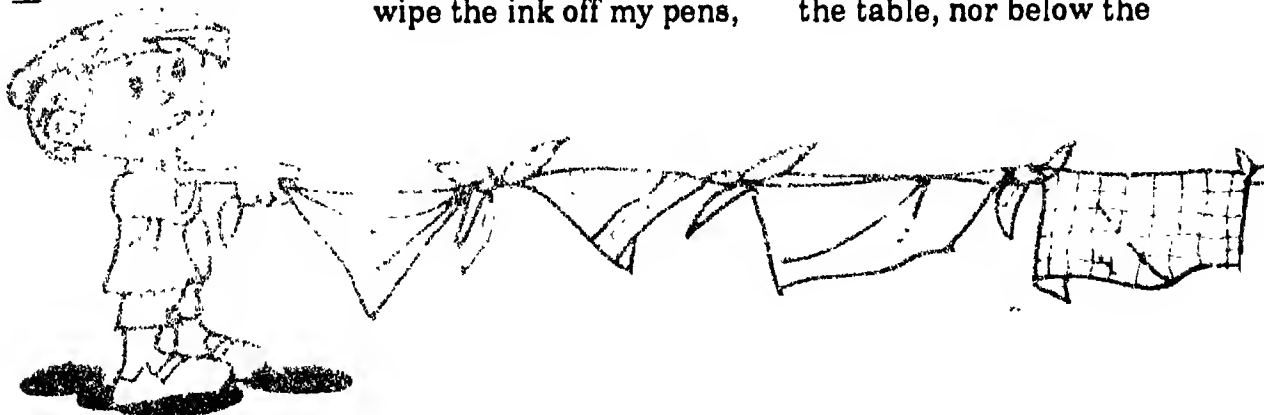
My hanky. I cannot go anywhere near school without my hanky. My hanky is my friend, my best companion, along with my pens, my sharpeners, my erasers, my lunch. And oh, my books, of course. I need my hanky to dust my desk, to wipe the ink off my pens,

to hide my face from a homework-demanding teacher. I need my hanky to muffle my ears when Raghu goes on and on about friendship.

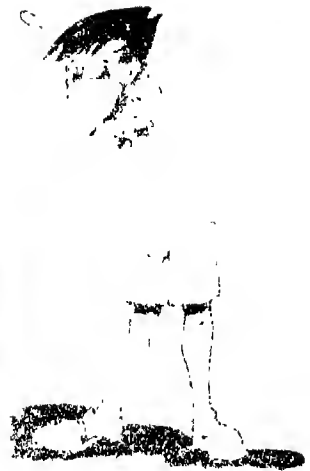
Anyway, the long and short of this tale is—I can't go to school without a hanky.

"Look in your cupboard," shouted my mother. "Under your table! On your table! Below your bed! Under the pillow! Inside your books! Between your socks! Pinned on the wall!"

But it was nowhere—not under my table, nor on the table, nor below the



TO YOU



bed nor... Not today's hanky, nor yesterday's nor the day before's, nor the day after's; not a single shred, not one single thread of a hanky, any hanky could be found.

Even my mother couldn't find one.

And then just as I was leaving for school in despair, hankyles, joyless, came a scream from my mother. "Hankies," she screamed and I ran at the magic word, ran all the way to the back door, to the backyard tap and there I saw the hankies, all the hankies, white, speckled, patterned, all the hankies in the world,

in the universe tied end to end, end to end, across the backyard, over the fence and into the next backyard. Raghu's—

And there in the next backyard, Raghu's, was crouching my brother, tying still another hanky to yet another one.

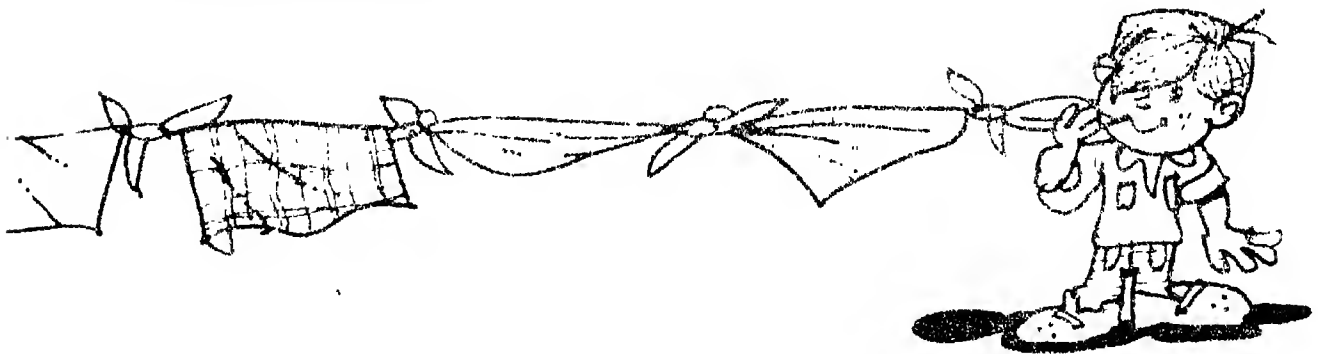
Of course he screamed. Screamed louder than my mother. Screamed that at this rate, he would never become famous. That his tele-communication line—his hanky-communication line—should not, never ever be untied, that he

would scream and scream till...

I was late to school. We both were, my brother and I. But it didn't matter. I'd got my hanky, dirty, muddied, wrinkled up but I'd got it. And now I could go with joy in my heart, ready to strangle Raghu who had given my brother the communication idea.

And my dear hanky would tie up Raghu, it would blindfold him, it would gag him and it would FINISH him.

*Yours hank fully,
Perky*



LONG LONG ago there was a mountain which was full of beautiful stones. There was a village called Dehli at the foot of this hill. The people of the village used to quarry the stones of the hill every day. These stones were sent to big markets, to be used to build fancy houses.

The area where the hill stood was very, very dry. There was seldom any rainfall. So the people of



Story: Saibal Chakravarty

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

Dehli, lived by selling the stones of the hill. They began their work in the morning with shovels and hammers and stopped only in the evening.

Years rolled by and the hill got smaller in size as rocks and stones were continuously being taken away from it. There were now more people in the village and so more shovels hit the hill everyday. The hill not only looked poorer but also felt lonely.

Trees stand in groups,

fishes swim in shoals and stars glitter like happy members of a family. But a mountain or a hill stands all alone, all the time.

One afternoon a black cloud came floating and stopped over the hill. The cloud had seen the hill earlier. But this time it was shocked to see it almost half its earlier size. Hundreds of people were desperately striking it with all kinds of tools even

as daylight dimmed. The cloud felt unhappy to see the hill being cut inch by inch every minute.

When it got dark and the villagers left for their homes, the cloud came lower, to be close to the peak of the hill.

"Don't you feel sorry?" it asked, "that those people keep on hitting you all the time?"

"Yes I do," replied the hill. "Not only do they rob me of my precious stones,

but I also feel very lonely. Years ago there were trees in my gorges and shrubs grew after it rained. I liked the touches of green here and there. Now I miss it very much. The birds also came and made nests on the trees. They sang songs of distant lands. Trees waved their branches, whenever the wind blew and the clouds roared in reply. I enjoyed all this. But now with no rain having fallen for a long time the trees have withered and birds do not visit this place any longer."

The cloud listened quietly and then asked, "You must be cursing the villagers because they hit you all the time?"

"I feel very bad, of course. But I know it's not their fault either," replied the hill. "The only way they can earn a living is by selling my stones. Nothing grows on this dry land. They do not know any other trade either. They hit me so that they may survive."

"Do you think if they could grow crops, they would give up hitting you?" asked the cloud.

"They might," replied the hill, "because tilling the earth is a much easier job, than breaking stones.

This is real hard work. Then by growing crops one gets the pleasure of producing something. But," he sighed, "the earth is so very dry here that no crops can possibly grow."

The cloud listened and waved to the other clouds floating by. Soon there was a mass of clouds on the peak of the hill ready to burst forth. Suddenly lightning flashed across the sky and it became dark all around. Then it rained. It rained and rained and rained like it never did.

The people of Dehli were amazed to see vast tracts of land flooded with rain water in the morning. The sky was still thick with grey clouds. There would be more rain later. The people started tilling the land. Weeks rolled by and the fields became full of green and ripe crops in due course.

"Are you happy?" the black cloud asked the hill one day.

"Of course, I am," answered the hill. "People no longer strike me. The dry trees on my gorges have come to life again. The birds have also returned. They sing the morning songs and I feel young and refreshed."

He paused and then

added, "All this is because of you, my dear friend."

"Thank you," the cloud said. "It's my pleasure to have a friend like you and to be of some help to the people of the village. But now, I must take leave of you," he said after a pause.

"Why?" the hill cried. "Why do you want to go? We have just got to know each other. The people are rejoicing in the growth of their crops. I want you to be here till they start harvesting."

"I wish, I could," a spurt of wind blew and the cloud floated away a little. "But we never stay at one place, we travel to all the places, you know."

Then it smiled and added, "And who knows there may be another hill as lonely and unhappy as you were... a tract of dry land waiting to become green all over... should I not reach out to that hill or those people desperately in need of rains? You tell me."

"Yes, you must," replied the hill. "But remember that I shall wait for you to return however far you go."

"That I would," agreed the cloud.

Hereafter whenever one comes across a field

with lush, green crops,
mused the hill as the

cloud floated and went out, 'one can be sure
that a heavy cloud must



STORY : GOPI GAUBA
ILLUSTRATED BY : Beejee

SMUGGLING IN THE JUNGLE

AT LAST

WE WANT THAT DOG.

WHAT FOR?

IN CASE SHE
BITES US.

SHE WON'T ATTACK
YOU. WE'LL HOLD
HER.

WE WANT
THAT DOG !



LEASH YOUR DOG. NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU OR YOUR DOG IF YOU DO AS YOU ARE TOLD.



OUTSIDE.

LOOK, A PLANE.

OH, THEY PASS BY EVERY MINUTE. IT'S THE AIR ROUTE... BUT THAT SOUNDS LIKE A HELICOPTER.

HURRY UP, GET INTO THE BOAT. HAVE YOU PUT IN THE CHEST?



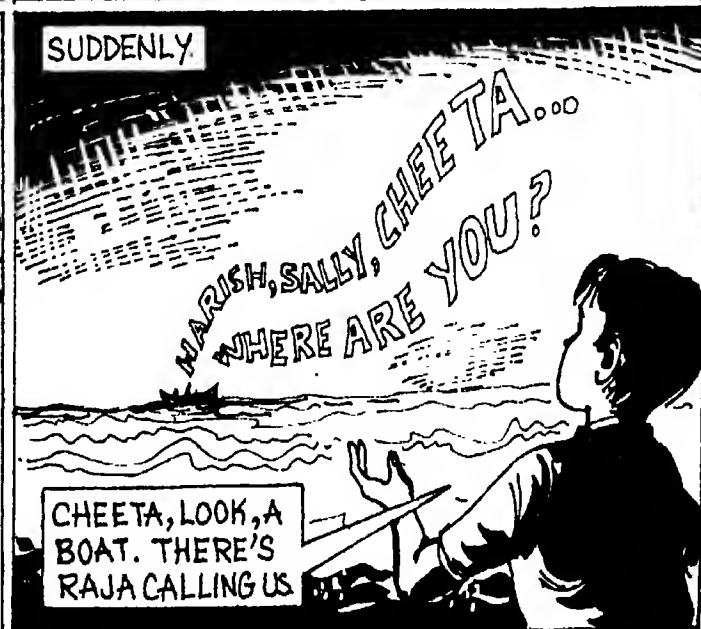
IT'S FOR US!



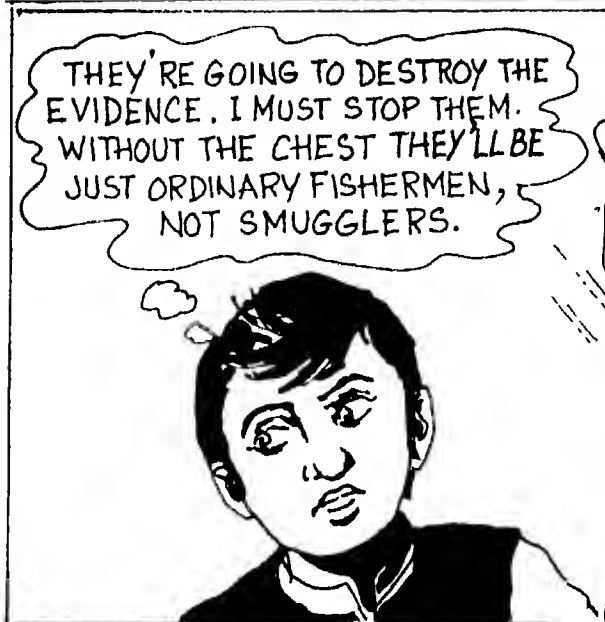
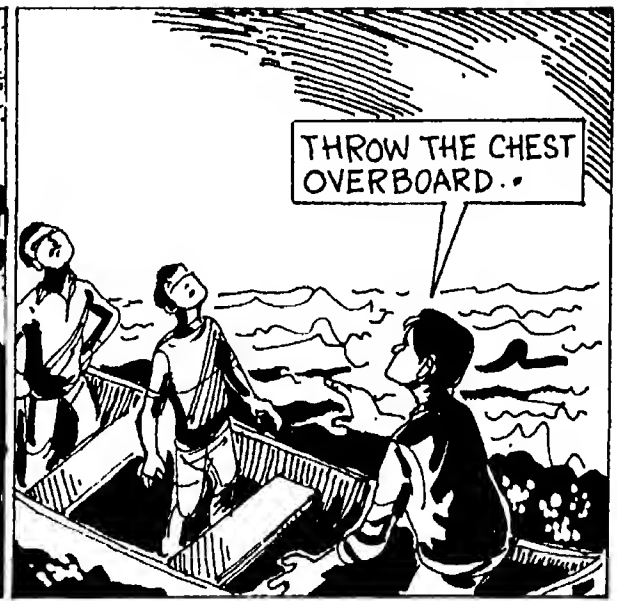
KEEP YOUR DOG QUIET OR I'LL THROW HER OVERBOARD.



SUDDENLY.



CHEETA, LOOK, A BOAT. THERE'S RAJA CALLING US.



SALLY, CHEETA AND HARISH IMMEDIATELY JUMP INTO THE OTHER BOAT. THE SMUGGLERS ARE ROUNDED UP AND TAKEN AWAY IN THE JEEPS BY THE POLICE.

END.

Smallest, largest, tallest...

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Birds are perhaps the most versatile of living things. They can fly, swim, sing and outrun some of the fastest runners of other species in the animal kingdom. They are also among the most colourful and beautiful creatures. They come in all shapes and sizes, not to speak of colours. They sing, mimic and laugh. From the large birds which are flightless to the fastest flyers which are tiny, they are a source of great wonder. Would you believe that the smallest bird is no larger than a bumble bee?

Here are some more interesting facts about aves for your file:

The world's **smallest** bird is the **Bee Hummingbird** which is about 5 cms long. It beats its wings at the rate of 60-70 times a **second making**

it the bird with the fastest wing-flapping speed.

The **largest** bird is the **Ostrich** which is 2.5 m high. It is also the **fastest** bird on land, running as fast as 65 kms per hour. Unlike other birds, they run like human beings, putting one foot forward at a time. Other birds hop with both feet together.

The **Barheaded Goose** which flies over the Himalayas is the **highest flyer**. It flies at an altitude of over 7500 m.

The **Arctic Tern** is the **greatest traveller**, covering a distance of over 18,000 kms each while migrating!

The **Emperor Penguin** is the **deepest diver** going upto 250 m under water.

Most birds have **monocular vision**, that is, each eye sees a separate

view. This they do because their eyes are set on either side of their heads. However, the **owl** and **woodcock** have **binocular vision**, that is, both the eyes have the same view. While the owl's eyes are set in front of the head, the woodcock's is set so far back that it can see both, the front and the back view simultaneously.

The lifespan of a bird is the longest when in captivity. The record for the **longest life** goes to an **Eagle Owl** that lived upto the age of 68 years and a pet **parrot** that lived to the ripe old age of 70!

There are more than 9300 species of birds in the world.

Among the **most endangered** species are the **Aldabra Warbler** and the flightless **White-throated Rail**, which are both found only on the



island of Aldabra in the Indian Ocean.

The earliest birds are believed to have lived about 140 million years ago and belonged to the family **Archaeopteryx**. The fossils resembled a reptile but due to the

presence of feathers, they were classified as birds.

The earliest birds, that is the present-day birds like falcons, owls, ostriches and penguins, evolved around 65 million years ago.

The Albatross has the

largest wingspan—about 12 feet.

Ospreys are really thrifty. They build huge nests of sticks and twigs and use them repeatedly—sometimes for as long as 40 years.

*Compiled by
Thangamani*

FORM IV

(See Rule 8)

Statement about ownership & other particulars about

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I, Vaijayanti Tonpe, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(Sd) Vaijayanti Tonpe
Publisher

1.3.1996

CROSSROADS 3

Personally Yours !

S.S.

The third of our series of crosswords, 'Personally Yours!' is about people with different attitudes and characteristics.

CLUES

ACROSS

A person who

- 1....tries to attract attention to himself by exaggerated or inappropriate behaviour: a show-off (13)
5....betrays his country by helping an invader (8)
6....is an awkward or rough fellow (4)
7....wants to preserve the existing order of things, feeling content or safe with things as they are (12)
8....leads a simple, austere life, devoting himself to contemplation or meditation (7)
9....believes in basing his life on facts and who

dislikes anything imaginary or impractical (7)

11....has unorthodox, non-conformist views, independent-minded (8)

14....worries constantly and unnecessarily about his health, believing he has many diseases (13)

16....(such as teacher, army officer) believes in and enforces strict discipline (8)

17....suffers from delusions of greatness (12)

DOWN

A person who

1....originates (begins) and conducts an enterprise

(12)

2....looks at the brighter side of life (8)

3....is an idler or a loafer (7)

4....is a criminal; an evil-doer (8)

10....is a powerful businessman (6)

12....is selflessly concerned about the welfare of others (8)

13 ...has an irresistible desire to steal and shoplift—though he may not need what he steals (12)

15....is devoted to and loves beauty in nature, art, painting, music etc. (8)

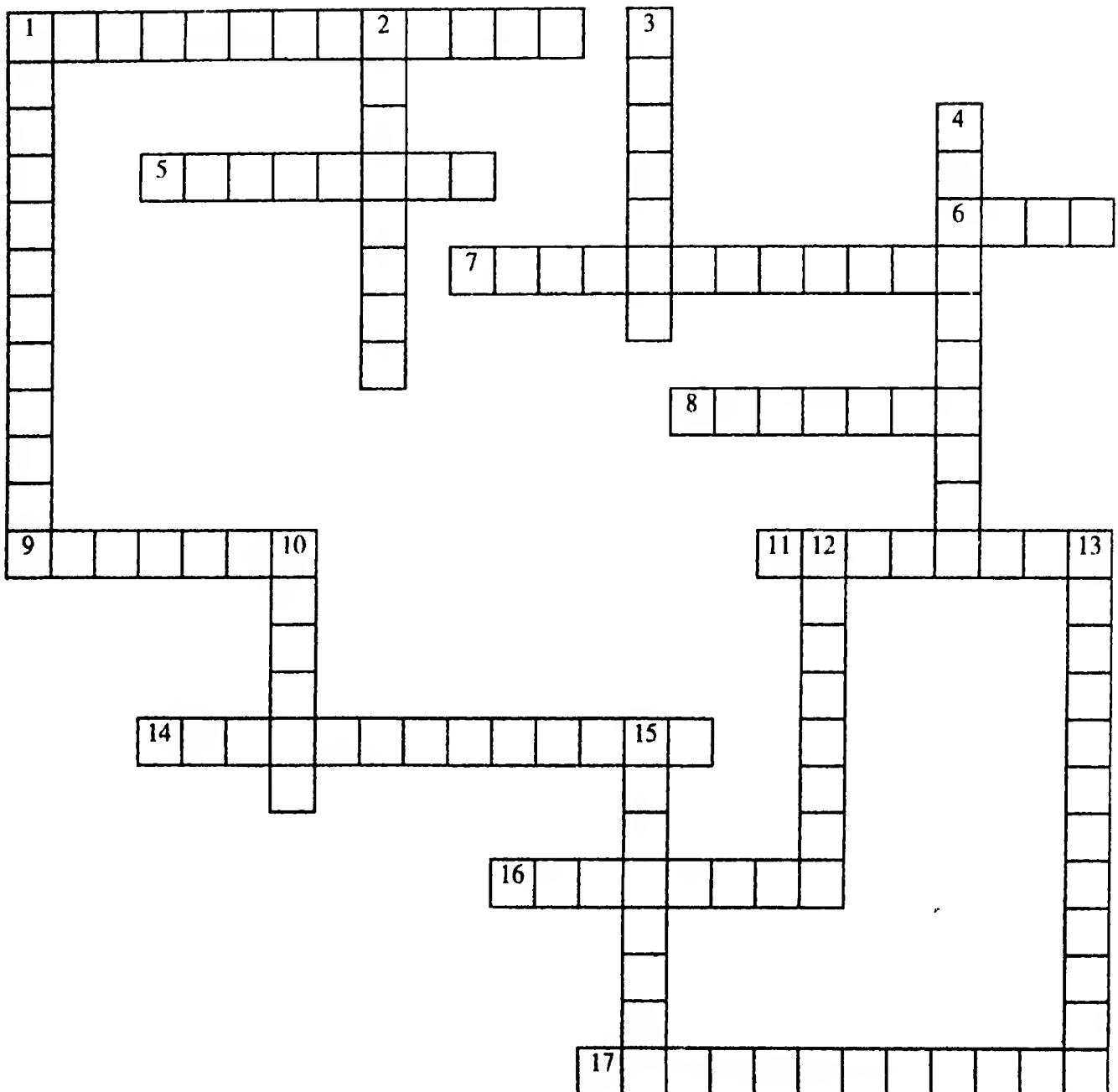
***Hurry up and send in the completed crossword!
The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year
gift subscription to Children's World. Last date
for receiving entries: March 15, 1996. Answers and
results in May 1996 issue***

Answers and results of Crossroads 2, 'Historically Yours', will appear in the April 1996 issue.

Congratulations! Nihshanka Debroy, New Delhi, winner of Crossroads 1, 'Currently Yours'!

CROSSROADS 3

Personally Yours!



Story: Thangamani

Illustration:

Subir Roy

RAVI HAD just finished having lunch on his return from school and was reading the newspaper when the phone rang. It was Amit.

Ravi's face went white, as he listened in silence. "When?" he said through dry lips, finally.

He sat there slumped in the chair after replacing the receiver. His mother who was in the same room, came closer.

"What is it, Ravi?"

"Sanjay has had an accident. His left leg has been amputated." His voice sounded like a stranger's to his own ears. He stood up and shaking his mother's hand off his shoulder, staggered out of the room. He wanted to be alone.

"Ravi..." starting after him, his mother stopped. He would be better off by himself, she decided.

In his room, Ravi sat at the table, unable to believe what he had just heard.

Sanjay...

They had been close friends since their nursery school days. But Sanjay had changed schools that year since they had shifted to their own house

I WILL
BE
THERE



in another part of the city almost at the other end. That had been more than six months ago. Ravi and Sanjay could see each other only if they visited each other's houses. Sanjay did not have a phone, so even telephone conversations were out. Of course, they still wrote letters. But it was not the same.

A lump came to Ravi's throat when he thought of his dear friend, lying helpless without his leg. Would he ever play football or tennis or even go for a swim? He remembered the awful loneliness he felt after Sanjay had left. After all, being together for 11 years and then parting is not easy. Suddenly, Ravi put his head on his arms and began sobbing.

It was after 3 p.m. He could still make it there and back if he left immediately. He washed his face and told his mother he was going to see Sanjay. As he left, he paused near his bookshelf. Sanjay loved reading just as he did. He pulled out *Swami and Friends* by R.K.Narayan, which he had bought the previous month.

All through the bus ride to Sanjay's house, Ravi was thinking of his friend

and the accident. How had it happened? Amit had not been able to give many details. He had only told him that Sanjay had lost a leg and had since come home from the hospital.

When he came to the building where Sanjay lived, he panicked. His first instinct was to turn and leave. He couldn't go through with it. But he forced himself to think of what he would say to him. Should he be sombre or gay? Would Sanjay cry when he saw him? Even as he was thinking on these lines, he reached the door and had rung the bell. Ravi felt trapped.

There was no turning back now.

As it turned out, he needn't have worried. Sanjay was sitting up in bed, fiddling with the remote control of the television.

"Oh, Ravi!" He was visibly happy to see him.

Somehow Ravi found his tongue. "How are you, Sanju?" he said in a stilted, brittle voice that hardly sounded like his own. And the moment the words were out, Ravi could have bitten his tongue. What an idiotic question!

"I am fine, fine!" said Sanjay. Obviously, he

didn't find anything odd about the question. "The doctors tell me that I can get a Jaipur foot. Then I can play, run... the lot!" he sounded too cheerful for it to be real.

"That's good," Ravi was vaguely reassured. And he was at a loss for words. It was awful. The two friends could talk through the day and night if they got half a chance, and here he was, searching for words to say! Then his eye fell on the book he was holding.

"Here! I brought this for you! It is hilarious. You must read the chapter where Swami and his friend, Mani, harass the cartman Karuppan..." Ravi was talking nineteen to the dozen, as he flipped the pages of the book. He tried to avoid looking at the empty space where Sanjay's leg used to be. There was just a bloody stump, wrapped in bandages.

"Oh, Swami! Give it to me!" Sanjay pulled the book out of his hands. Now Ravi didn't have anything else to fiddle with. He kept looking at the pattern on the carpet; a large rose with thick fleshy leaves. He stared at it so intently that he unconsciously memorised the design. He felt sick of

it. He had to talk... get it over with. Abruptly, he got up and went to the window.

"Sanju, how did it happen?" There! It was out, though he wished he didn't have to go through with it. He was looking outside. But when there was no reply from Sanjay, he turned. Sanjay's face was twisted in agony, his eyes screwed shut. God! What had he gone and done to his friend?

"Sanju!" He ran to the bed, but found he was unable to do anything more than awkwardly pat Sanjay on the shoulder. He felt like a stranger. "Does it hurt too much? Shall I call your Mother?" he asked. All he wanted to do was to run away. He hated himself, the accident, his predicament. Just then Sanjay opened his eyes. His face was bathed in sweat.

"It's nothing. Sometimes it hurts like hell, though." He managed a weak smile. "You know where? In my knee! The knee, which I don't have!" he chuckled. Ravi hated Sanjay at that moment. He felt unreasonably that Sanjay was making things difficult for him. How much easier it would have been if he had just broken down and cried, had been

angry or even bitter. His cheerfulness made Ravi feel awfully guilty.

"Hey, Ravi! Will you scratch my left foot? It is itching like mad. The doctor calls it a phantom itch! How absolutely funny!"

This time though, Sanjay wasn't being flippant. His cheeks were wet. All the pent up sorrow in Ravi's own heart found an echo in his tears. "Sanju!" In one instant the two friends were in each other's arms, tears mingling, trying to comfort each other.

Sanjay slowly narrated the incident. His school bus did not go upto their colony, so he had to take a public transport bus. But that fateful day, he had been too tired to wait, and had thumbled a ride from a scooterist. Unfortunately, a truck had knocked the scooter and sent Sanjay flying. Another truck coming behind had run over his leg. "I heard the bones crunching..." Sanjay's voice was a hoarse whisper.

The doctors gave up the fight to save his leg after a week, since gangrene set in, and he had lost his left leg which had been amputated above the knee. When he finished, Ravi

found his eyes going to the stump even though he tried to keep them averted. He felt nausea rising up. He closed his eyes and could almost feel the pain Sanjay must have felt on that day as he lay, still conscious, his thigh mashed to a pulp...He felt stifled, unable to breathe.

"I'm so glad you came today. Everyone has been so busy. They all tell me to be brave! How can I?"

Now that Sanjay was crying, feeling sad and bitter — the very things Ravi had wanted him to feel a little while ago — he still felt uncomfortable.

What do you say to your dearest friend who has lost his leg and is looking for comfort? More than ever, Ravi wanted to get away.

Just then, he happened to glance at a sheet of paper stuck on Sanjay's study table. It was Sanjay's daily timetable—before his accident. It said:

5:30 wake up
5:45 skipping
6:00 jogging..."

Ravi couldn't bear to read the rest. "Oh, Sanju! I have a computer project to submit tomorrow. I have to rush!" he babbled, pushing back his chair.

"Have a cup of tea at least!" said Sanjay's mother, stopping him.

"No, aunty! I will come later. Bye, Sanju!" he called out as he walked out. Sanjay's mother called him back and gave him their telephone number. The men from the telephone department were installing their phone just then. He shoved the piece of paper into his pocket, rushing out.

"Come again soon!" called his friend, puzzled by Ravi's hurried departure.

By the time he reached home, Ravi had composed



himself. To his mother he described the accident in graphic detail, almost breezily. For a moment she looked at him, but he quickly lowered his eyes. She was too shrewd to miss the pain in them or fail to understand it, but Ravi didn't want anyone to see it, leave alone understand it. His pain was his alone and he wanted to guard it, as if by suffering alone, he could somehow share his friend's pain.

But he didn't call Sanjay; not the next day or the next or even after a week. He kept pulling out the now crumpled piece of paper and staring at it before pushing it back into his pocket. To his mother he said that he had a lot of school work to catch up with. He worked like one possessed, writing new programmes for his computer project, entering his name for the play fest and studying. There was only one thing he avoided—going out to play. He even stopped taking his cycle out. He felt unreasonably guilty for having two whole legs when his dearest friend had just one. But had someone told him that, he would have denied it. Ravi was a very confused person that

week.

He avoided phone calls, telling his mother he didn't want to be disturbed since he was so busy.

"Are you?" she asked him quietly.

Ravi lowered his eyes. He seemed to be doing that a lot, lately. But to give her credit, she never asked why he didn't speak to Sanjay over the phone, or go to see him again. But his father was a different matter.

"Haven't you called Sanjay?" he asked at dinner one day. He had gone to see the boy a couple of days ago with Ravi's mother. "The poor boy is so lonely and he misses you. He said he has read the book you gave him at least three times."

Ravi choked on the mouthful of food he was chewing. "Uh...no...I have been so busy..."

"That's no excuse," began his father angrily.

At that moment his mother accidentally knocked a glass of water and in the ensuing commotion the topic was not raised again. Ravi glanced at his mother. Had it been intentional? He could not say from her blank look. But she had covered up

for him at other times too.

"No, Sanju. He's gone for his rehearsals."

"He's sleeping after staying up for more than 12 hours working on his computer project. Shall I ask him to call you later?"

She never once told him to call Sanjay. Only once when she caught him staring at the wall with tears in his eyes did she say, "Ravi, life is difficult sometimes, but nothing is so hopeless. There is no use running away from reality. Things can always be made better."

"Better? How do you plan to make things better for Sanju?" he almost shouted at her.

"The Jaipur foot is a wonderful invention. With practice, he can practically do anything he wants, even play games!"

"That's a load of crap! Sanju is a cripple and no fancy foot is going to change it or make him whole. I can't see him suffer! I wish I could do something. Oh, it is impossible! Why him? Why me?" Ravi didn't mean to sound so dramatic, but that was exactly how he felt.

"Because he has a lot of mental strength and because he has a friend like you. You can help him

heal in body and mind.
Please Ravi, try, for both
your sakes," she pleaded.

"Just leave me alone,
Mummy," Ravi left the
place abruptly.

After that he avoided
looking at her or speaking
much. He kept telling
himself that he had no
time with so many things
to do: that Sanjay would
be better off alone than to
have a weepy friend visit
him. But the excuses
sounded hollow.

Things might have
continued in a similar
fashion, but something
happened the following
week. He won the best
actor award in the play
fest. His first thought was
for Sanjay. This was the
first major activity he had
taken part in, after he had
left the school. They
usually rejoiced in each
other's achievements.

Would Sanjay be happy
now? He chided himself
for the thought. How could
he expect Sanjay to share
his joy, when he had not
even bothered to call him?
What kind of friend had
he been to Sanjay who
needed his support and
love the most at the worst
time in his life.

In a rage, he wheeled
out his bike and kept
pedalling furiously for
several hours. He alter-

nately licked the salt of
his tears and brushed
them off with his hand as
he rode. He returned only
when he was limp with
tiredness.

His mother had left the
key with a neighbour and
gone to the market. He
switched on the light in
his room. His eyes fell on
a sheet of pink paper—his
mother's letterhead.

*"It's all right, Ravi.
Sanju will understand.*

*Joy is meant to be shared
as much as pain is."* His
number was scrawled
underneath.

Ravi kept staring at the
number. Suddenly the
guilt of the last few weeks
melted away from his
mind. Could his mother be
right? Would Sanjay
understand?

There was only one way
to find out and make
amends for his behaviour.
He picked up the phone
and began dialling
Sanjay's number...

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Of Blue Jays and Mockingbirds

By Reader of the month: Sudha Sanjeev

'I turned to go home. Street lights winked down the street all the way to town. I had never seen our neighbourhood from this angle. There were Miss Maudies', Miss Stephanie's—there was our house, I could see the porch swing—Miss Rachel's house was beyond us, plainly visible. I could even see Mrs. Dubose's.

'I looked behind me. To the left of the brown door was a long shuttered window. I walked to it, stood in front of it, and turned around. In daylight, I thought, you could see to the post-office corner.

'Daylight... in my mind, the night faded. It was daytime and the neighbourhood was busy. Miss Stephanie Crawford crossed the street to tell the latest to Miss Rachel. Miss Maudie bent over her azaleas. It was summer-time, and two children scampered down the

sidewalk towards a man approaching in the distance. The man waved, and the children raced each other to him.

'It was still summer-time and the children came closer. A boy trudged down the sidewalk dragging a fishing pole behind him. A man stood waiting with his hands on his hips. Summer-time, and his children played in the front yard with their friend, enacting a strange little drama of their own invention.

'It was fall, and his children fought on the sidewalk in front of Mrs. Dubose's. The boy helped his sister to her feet, and they made their way home. Fall, and his children trotted to and fro around the corner, the day's woes and triumphs on their faces. They stopped at an oak tree, delighted, puzzled and apprehensive.

Winter, and his children shivered at the front gate, silhouetted against a blazing house. Winter, and a man walked into the street, dropped his glasses, and shot a dog.

'Summer, and he watched his children's heart break. Autumn again, and Boo's children needed him.

'Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them.'

It's difficult to enumerate everything that Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* wants to convey, but if there is one thing that catches the essence of the book, it is Atticus' oft-repeated words that one can never really understand a man until one 'climbs into his skin and walks around in it'. And that is precisely what the book makes one do.

As one is drawn into the narrative, the events are unfolded through the eyes of eight-year-old Scout. Her brother, Jem, and father, Atticus, form the core of her world. And periodically her life is touched by events and by the presence of others: Dill, her summer-time friend and 'informal fiance'; Jack, her uncle, very like Atticus and yet not as adept with children; Calpurnia, their negro maid, who instinctively knows when to be strict and when not to; Miss Maudie, Stephanie Crawford, Mrs. Dubose, Mr. Avery—the neighbours, ordinary in every way yet distinct; school with Miss Caroline, her teacher, who has to be handled with kid gloves; the trial of a Negro that dominated her life for several days; and, of course, Boo Radley, surrounded by mystery, the invisible entity whose presence is felt throughout.

To Kill a Mockingbird is about ordinary lives, about growing up, about relationships, about human nature, about courage and dignity, about privacy, about principles, honesty and, not the least, about consideration and

humaneness.

Atticus is the mainstay of the story, for it is he who guides and moulds his children, he eases the daily stresses and traumas they encounter. He proves to be an effective role model, for, as Miss Maudie tells Scout and Jem, "Atticus Finch is the same in the house as he is on public streets." Mild though he seemingly is, his children are inclined to obey him, recognising that he is scrupulously fair and has the same set of values for himself as for others. Which is why Jem is eager not to shatter the faith Atticus has in him. "Atticus ain't ever whipped me since I remember. I want to keep it that way."

It's not the same with Uncle Jack who forbids Scout from using foul language and wallops her when she does so. Scout sagely points out the difference between Atticus and her uncle, "Uncle Jack... you don't understand children much...in the first place you never stopped to give me a chance to tell my side of it—you just lit right into me. When Jem an' I fuss, Atticus doesn't ever just listen to Jem's side of it, he hears mine too..."

Uncle Jack is definitely a wiser, though rueful, man after this insight into child psychology!

A chastened Uncle Jack admits to Atticus that he was, perhaps, wrong in punishing Scout because she didn't actually know the meaning of the words she used. In fact he is so embarrassed when Scout asks him, "What's a whore-lady?" that he gives her a lecture on Lord Melbourne! Atticus is obviously amused and amazed at this! "Jack! when a child asks you something, answer him, for goodness' sake. But don't make a production of it. Children are children but they can spot an evasion quicker than adults, and evasion simply muddles 'em."

Scout and Jem go through a trying time. Their father, a lawyer, is appointed to defend a negro, Tom Robinson, accused of raping a white girl. That Atticus should actually choose to defend Tom to the best of his ability is what the townsfolk cannot accept. Jem and Scout bear the brunt of the scorn and barbs of the children and adults of Maycomb country.

Atticus tries to explain

to Scout why he has to take up the case. "This case, Tom Robinson's case, is something that goes to the essence of a man's conscience—Scout, I couldn't go to church and worship God if I didn't try to help that man...before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

The effect the trial would have on his children worries Atticus. "I hope and pray I can get Jem and Scout through without catching Maycomb's usual disease. Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don't pretend to understand..."

The case has far-reaching consequences. Scout and Jem have to face some harsh realities. Life's complexities are hard to understand. What seems correct to them does not appear so to the society around them. But they do understand that their father is one of a kind and he is a brave man. Atticus' actions fit his own definition of true courage. "I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do."

And then there is the title. When Atticus gives Jem an air gun, he tells

him, "Shoot all the blue jays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

Miss Maudie elaborates, "Mockingbirds, don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

In a span of two years, Scout gets a glimpse of the blue jays and mockingbirds that fly through her life. To use her own words— "As I made my way home, I thought Jem and I would get grown but there wasn't much else left for us to learn except possibly algebra." What a reassuring thought!

Facts for Fun

There are 45 miles of nerves in the skin of a human.

★

The platypus eats its own weight in worms daily.

★

Walking fast burns up eight times as many calories as writing.

★

A fly moves its wings at the rate of 330 strokes

per second.

★

The nail on the middle finger of our hand grows fastest; the thumbnail grows slowest.

★

Tooth decay is the most common disease in the world.

★

A frog's tongue grows from the front of its

mouth, allowing it to reach out farther to catch insects.

★

The tip of a kiwi's beak is extremely sensitive; it can detect worms deep in the ground.

★

The wheeled vehicle used for transport is 1000 years older than the road.

Questionnaires could be Fun

**Let's get quizzical—
Psychology**

**Contributors: Jane
Sherrod Singer,
Jean Black & Sid
Krupicker**

**Compiled and edited
by Vijaya Kumar**

**Let's get quizzical—
Teenagers**

**Contributors: Jane
Sherrod Singer,
Frank S. Caprio &
P. Carbone**

**Compiled and edited
by Vijaya Kumar**

**Published by Sterling
Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,
New Delhi**

**Price: Rs. 50 for each
volume**

Questionnaires are fun. No matter how young or old one is, one enjoys answering them. For everyone is curious to know about oneself. And evaluating oneself, awarding points, is enjoyable.

But they are just that—good fun. I wonder if the analysis is ever taken

seriously enough to attempt self-improvement. The two volumes under review are collections of such questionnaires.

The various headings under which the questions are grouped are interesting. They range from finding out if one is emotionally mature and whether one has the ability to find happiness, to whether one is a habitual complainer. (Psychology)

The volume 'Teenagers' deals mostly with adolescent concerns like skin problems (Save your skin), appearance (Your clothes say a lot about you), feelings of insecurity (Do people really like you) and, of course, boy friends/girl friends, dating etc. etc.

This volume is also essentially on psychology. Some of the questionnaires like 'Save your skin' are given in an informative format with

True or False answers with explanations. More such questionnaires would have added to the informative value of the volumes.

Knowing the general weakness of readers to 'cheat' by giving the 'right' answers to questions, some chapters like 'Are you strong-willed?' are designed with open-ended questions which have no 'right' answers. These are the ones which really help in evaluating oneself.

The volumes are compiled from imported sources and the efforts of the editor to suitably 'Indianise' them proves disastrous. For one, the boxed introduction before each questionnaire (the editor calls them quizzes, and even invites readers to 'get quizzical', whatever that means), are more confusing than explanatory. The language and grammar leave a lot to be desired. It is absurd at

places: (i) How is your exercise I.Q.? (ii) Do you help? (iii) Can you get on top of life? are but a few of the countless bloomers.

The editor has perhaps been carried away by the assumption that snappy headings and breezy prose catch the reader's eye. They do, if they are correct.

Barring this major fault, the volumes are interesting. If a little care had been taken to arrange the questionnaires sequentially and subjectwise, it would have been more interesting. Also, one can only take a few questionnaires at a time. After all, too much self-analysing can be disturbing!

Thangamani

Dinosaurs (English)
By Purnima Rupal
Text illustration by P. Ghosh; cover and inside lay-out by Pradip Benerjee
Designed, printed and published by Publications and Information Directorate (CSIR), New Delhi
Price: Rs. 30

This book, the first of a SCI-FUN Series by the PID (CSIR), was on display in a stall at the 'Dinosaurs Alive' exhibi-

tion by the National Council of Science Museums at the National Science Centre, Delhi. Indeed, it deserves to be on the bookshelf of every child. It is science and, what is more, it is fun.

Mani and Karan are two brothers who sit down at a game of Scrabble and end up getting tremendously involved with dinosaurs. It is their mother who first feeds their curiosity, and then their father. Before going off to heat the food for dinner, Mummy explains, for example, what 'recrystallization', 'isotope', 'half-life' are. Daddy enacts how dinosaurs—in contrast to crocodiles—moved, lifting their bellies off the ground. Their parents also take Mani and Karan to the film *Jurassic Park* and finally to the NCSM exhibition.

In the process, a lot of pre-history and science gets explained in simple yet accurate terms. How large were the dinosaurs? How social were they? Were they dull creatures or colourful personalities? And so on.

Not only is the book useful for children, it can prove a good introduction for adults whose worlds are devoid of creatures

like the *Parasaulolophuses* or the *Deinonychus*.

One question, however. Despite what Mummy says, why cannot Karan use the word *Allosaurus* in a game of Scrabble, especially as the book itself (on page 2) states it to be "a common noun like cat, dog etc"?

The Tale of the Tailor-Bird and Other Stories, Upendrakishore Raychowdhury, Translated from Bengali by Chameli Bose
Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
1994

Price: Rs. 35

Upendrakishore Raychowdhury needs no introduction for most Bengali children. At least two generations of them have been brought up on "Tuntuni's Book" (*Tuntunir boi*). The original book was in Bengali and has therefore been deprived of a non-Bengali readership till recently. This is, most probably, the second attempt to remedy this.

Upendrakishore pioneered children's literature in Bengal. Not only did he write for children,

but also illustrated, printed, published and edited (*Sandesh*) for them. The original "Tuntuni's Book" was (and remains) one of the very few books where the author is himself the illustrator. Thanks to the publishers of the present version for retaining the original illustrations. Though in black and white, and clearly 'period pieces', they embellish the book as no contemporary coloured plates can.

The front cover too is a colourful rendering of an original illustration.

About the stories themselves, they are perennials, evergreens. Look around you, and you will

find a 'Majantali Sarkar' and a 'Narahari Das'. You will find 'The Wicked Tiger', 'The Foolish Crocodile' and 'The Learned Fox' somewhere still. Like *Aesop's Fables* and the *Panchatantra*, this book will never fall behind times.

What can detract from their value is, of course, the quality of the translations. And Upendrakishore Raychowdhry (or son, Sukumar Ray, famous for his nonsense verse) is not easy to translate. However, Chameli Bose's prose translation is quite good and the text flows freely. Where she does trip up is when there is the occa-

sional rhyme to translate. These are no better than ordinary. For example, "Roll, you gourd, roll, roll, roll" (page 15) does not quite capture the magic of *Lau garhgarh lau garhgarh*.

But then, what would?

No, the complaint, if any, against the book is that it should have contained a biographical note on Upendrakishore. Published in December 1994, this translation is targeted at the entrants to the twenty-first century, and, after all, Upendrakishore wrote in the early part of the twentieth.

Dipavali Debroy



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Crocodile Tears

**Text: Pranav Trivedi
CEE-NFS**

**Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury**

INDIA IS home to three species of crocodiles: the Mugger or Marsh crocodile (*Crocodilus palustris*), Estuarine or Salt-water crocodile (*Crocodilus porosus*) and the long-snouted Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*). Mugger is a fresh water crocodile distributed practically all over India inhabiting the rivers, lakes, ponds and marshes where it can get sufficient prey. The Salt-water crocodiles (or Salty,

as they are popularly known), dwell in the estuaries of Ganga, Mahanadi, Cauvery and Brahmaputra river systems as well as in the marine swamps along the eastern coast of the country. It is also found in the Andaman and Nicobar islands. The unique and long-snouted Gharial is confined to the Indus, Ganga, Brahmaputra and Mahanadi river systems in the Indian sub-continent.

These three pre-historic, armoured reptiles which have been existing on this planet in more or less the same form since

the Triassic era (i.e. 190 million years ago), are today finding themselves engulfed by a multitude of problems that threaten their survival. The Gharial was nearly extinct by the 1970s and the Salty too faced a similar fate. Mugger, being the most adaptive of the three, somehow managed to hold on for some time, but was nonetheless endangered. All the three earned a place in IUCN's Red Data Book of endangered species, thanks to drastic anthropogenic changes in habitat and prey population, besides indiscriminate hunting for

crocodile skin, a highly profitable activity.

A Government of India commissioned survey of the status of these crocodiles was carried out by an FAO/UNDP expert Dr. Robert Bustard, who confirmed that the status of these reptiles was alarmingly precarious. A large-scale project involving captive breeding and reintroduction of the crocodiles was recommended in order to rebuild their depleted populations. Realizing the desperate need for prompt action if the crocodiles were to be saved, the Government of India launched "Project Crocodile" in 1975 with funding from FAO.

Now, two decades after the inception of the project, the Gharial has staged a comeback in the Ganga and Mahanadi river systems, the Saltie is secure in its mangrove intertidal habitat and the ubiquitous Mugger has managed to step out of the IUCN Red Data Book. Today, there are more than 25 crocodile rearing centres in the twelve states across the country. About 2,000 Gharials, and more than a thousand Salties and Muggers have been captively reared and

released in the wild. At most introduction sites, natural breeding has begun.

On the face of it, the Crocodile Project appears to have largely achieved its objectives, but a closer look reveals that not only are the released crocodiles facing threats, even those in captivity have an uncertain future. There are several problems that threaten the survival of crocodiles that have been released into the wild.

Crocodiles are carnivores and stray man-eating cases have been responsible for turnin

local people hostile to crocodile re-introduction in their surroundings. The feeling that crocodiles will deplete the available stocks of fish in the water bodies has spurred conflict between forest officials and the local fishermen. These problems have confined the release sites to a few protected areas and the possibility of reintroducing crocodiles in the vicinity of human dwellings remains remote.

Although most people, including scientists, feel that there is an abundance of crocodiles in the wild in the country, few



are aware that they are constantly under threat from hunting.

The future of the crocodiles awaiting release into the wild seems bleak as there is no clear long-term policy on management of the habitat of these animals. While monitoring and rearing programmes are going on, there are not enough sites available for release. Existing captive rearing facilities are overpopulated with crocodiles making management of space extremely difficult. Fortunately, since the crocodiles are cold-blooded vertebrates, the problem of feeding them is not as severe compared to mammals of the same size which consume much more food.

These kind of problems were not envisaged while planning the project and that is why such a promising project appears to be floundering. The Government needs to formulate a clear policy for crocodile conservation in the wild as well as in captivity. There is also a need to broaden the scope of the project by considering the possibility of servicing the market stock of crocodiles for commercial purposes. Since crocodile skin fetches a high price in the

market, this avenue deserves particular attention, especially when many other countries are involved in this trade in a sustainable manner. In Papua New Guinea for example, the local communities have been involved in rearing the crocodiles to harvestable size and the Government handles the marketing aspect.

This strategy of sharing benefits with the locals can be quite effective in India too. In regions like North east India, Orissa and West Bengal, where a major part of the population is already engaged in similar harvesting of other wildlife illegally, legal crocodile farming is worth trying.

Scientific experiments regarding commercial harvesting can be initiated in private facilities like Madras Crocodile Bank and some selected locations such as Gir Sanctuary for Mugger, Bhitarkanika for the Salty and Chambal Sanctuary for Gharial. Madras Crocodile Bank with its large numbers of captive-bred crocodiles and trained manpower can become a focal point for a new face of the Crocodile Project.

Also the notion that

there are enough crocodiles in the wild now, needs to be corrected as the rate of recovery has only been marginal and that too in a few Protected Areas. Searching for more potential re-introduction sites and improving management of already released crocodiles should get prime importance in the policy. Maximum efforts to release as many crocodiles as possible into the wild is vital to ensure long-term survival of the three crocodiles. There is a need to increase awareness among people regarding the true nature of crocodiles and the role that they play in aquatic ecosystems. This, combined with their actual involvement in conservation i.e. sustainable utilization of the crocodiles will certainly create more hope for the crocodile family.

Till the Government realises that projects of this nature need a continuous monitoring, frequent evaluation and people's involvement, and frames a policy accordingly, the crocodiles will keep waiting in their overcrowded artificial homes shedding tears over their uncertain future...!

Invitation to The 9th Kanagawa Biennial World Children's Art Exhibition

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The Kanagawa Biennial World Children's Art Exhibition, founded in 1980, is an international festival of children's art. The festival aims to promote mutual understanding of the lives and cultures of the peoples of the world through art, and to foster the dreams and creativity of children, the bearers of the future.

The eighth Kanagawa Biennial Exhibition, in March 1995, received approximately 45,000 entries from 118 countries and 4 regions throughout the world. We hope to receive an even greater number of applications for the next Kanagawa Biennial Exhibition, to be held in March 1997.

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Japan, The National
Council of YMCAs of
Japan, Japan Commit-
tee for UNICEF, Prefec-
tural Municipalities,
Kanagawa Prefectural
Board of Education,
Prefectural Municipali-
ties' Boards of Educa-
tion.

Qualification

Applicants must be between the ages of four and fifteen as of September 30, 1996. (Japanese children temporarily residing abroad are not eligible to enter.)

Entries

Subject: Open

Medium: Open. Applicants may use water colour, oil, crayon, pastel, print, collage or any other medium of their choice. However, due to their fragility, sculptures, etc. will not be accepted. With regard to collage, pieces using grains which can easily become worm-eaten

or those which can rot away will not be accepted.

Size: Not exceeding 55 x 55 cm.

Note: Entries must be made by the children themselves. Entries already submitted to another exhibition or contest will not be accepted, nor will jointly-produced entries. Only one entry per applicant will be accepted.

Other: Please do not frame the piece.

How to apply

The entry should be submitted with the completed application form firmly attached to the reverse side of the piece, so that it won't come off. If this is not possible, applicants should write on the reverse side of their pieces all the following information: name, date of birth, age, sex, school year, address, the title of the piece, as well as date of completion. Please be sure to write the complete home address so that mail can be delivered without

fail. If applicant's home address is different from the mailing address, please indicate the correct mailing address in the specified space. In case of group entry, group's name and address should also be filled in accurately as certificates and prizes will be sent to the associated group. Please also enclose a list of applicants with such information as name, age, sex and address. All writing should be done in Roman block letters. Please note that those applicants who have failed to fill in their ages will be disqualified.

Mailing address

Entries should be mailed to the following address. If they are sent by freight, several days are required to clear them through customs, and their arrival may be delayed.

Secretariat

The 9th Kanagawa Biennial World Children's Art Exhibition

**c/o International Division, Foreign Affairs Department
Kanagawa Prefectural Government**

**1, Nihon-odori,
Nakaku,
Yokohama City,
Kanagawa Prefecture
231-88**

Japan

**(Telephone in Japan:
045-201-1111, extension
2931 Facsimile: 045-212-
2753)**

Deadline

Entries must arrive at the above address by September 30, 1996.

Notification of prize winners

Winners will be notified directly, or for group winners, the group representative will be notified, some time in February 1997.

Exhibition

Selected entries, including those awarded Grand Prizes, will be displayed in March 1997 in the Kanagawa Kenmin Hall Gallery in Yokohama, and then at various places throughout Kanagawa.

Awards

**Three Grand Prizes:
Governor of Kanagawa Award**

Foreign winners of the Grand Prizes will be invited to Kanagawa with one accompanying adult to attend the award

ceremony scheduled for March 1997 and to tour Kanagawa Prefecture for several days.

Special Prizes: Minister for Foreign Affairs Award, Ministry of Home Affairs Award, President of Japan Foundation Award, President of Japan International Cooperation Agency Award, President of United Nations Association of Japan Award, President of National Foundation of UNESCO Association in Japan Award, The National Council of YMCAs of Japan Award, President of Japan Committee for UNICEF Award.

Gold Prizes: Governor of Kanagawa Award

Silver Prizes: Governor of Kanagawa Award

Selected Entries:
1,200

Please note

Entries submitted will not be returned. Ownership and copyright will belong to the sponsor. The entries will be used in programs designed to promote mutual understanding and international exchanges among the peoples of the world.

PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the *Children's World* Pen-friends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have pen-friends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends, it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

7972
Madhuri V. (12)
Dr. Kunhalu's Nursing Home
RMO Quarters
T.D. Road, Ernakulam
Cochin 682028
Kerala, India
Pen-friendship, dance
Any country

7973
Sangeeta (10)
Aswathi
37/2136 P.C. Road
Kaloor, Cochin 682017
Kerala, India
Drawing, reading
Any country

7974
Bhavana Sharma (15)

B-60 Amar Colony
Lajpat Nagar IV
New Delhi 110024, India
Painting, music
Any country

7975
Saloni Singh (13)
51-A Lytton Road
Dehra Dun 248001
U.P., India
Dance, reading
Any country

7976
Sabari Vasan (11)
64 Venkatarathinam
Nagar
Adyar, Madras 600020
Tamil Nadu, India
Stamps, reading
Any country

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB ENROLMENT FORM

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Name: Mister / Miss. Age* Years

(IN BLOCK LETTERS)

Address:
.....

Hobbies:

Pen-friends wanted in (Country)

*Age limit 16 years

Signature

GIRLS

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>7977
Renu Gupta (15)
464 Haider Quli
Chandni Chowk
Delhi 110006
Reading, music
India</p> <p>7978
Nelin Pertin (14)
Central Silk Board
Dist. D/Valley
Muga Farm, P.O. Tia
Arunachal
Pradesh 792110, India
Reading, collecting
quotations
Any country</p> <p>7979
B. Shilpa (13)
A/15, Pavatenagar
Dharwad 580003
Karnataka, India
Drawing, reading
Australia, Egypt</p> <p>7980
Parul Kshetrapal (16)
BJ-87 (E), Shalimar Bagh
Delhi 110052, India
Music, reading
Any country</p> <p>7981
Shrinkhla Sahai (11)
C-9/9313 Vasant Kunj
New Delhi 110070, India
Reading, dancing
Any country</p> <p>7982
Saumya Roy (9)
c/o Mr. S.K. Roy
B-1/4, Flat No. B/6
Kalyani, Nadia 741235</p> | <p>West Bengal, India
Reading, drawing
U.K., U.S.A.</p> <p>7983
Sushmita Mukherjee (11)
214/6 Saraswati Kunj
University of Roorkee
Roorkee 247667
Uttar Pradesh
Singing, drawing
India</p> <p>7984
N. Sunanda (11)
No. 6, Vinayaka Flats
143 Choolaimedu
High Road
Madras 600094
Tamil Nadu, India
Music, drawing
U.K., U.S.A.</p> <p>7985
Deepti Sethi (14)
384 Bhera Enclave
Near Paschim Vihar
Outer Ring Road
New Delhi 110041 India
Reading, travelling
India, U.S.A.</p> <p>7986
Gayatri Shendya (12)
A-6/11 Flat 30
Sawant Sadan
LIC Colony, Borivili (W)
Bombay 400103
Maharashtra, India
Swimming, dancing
India, Malta</p> <p>7987
Sarika Sawant (15)
d/o Ashok Sawant
3 Police Qrts.</p> | <p>Opp. Hotel Shreya
Near Virar West
Thane Dist. 401303
Maharashtra, India,
Singing, stamps
India, Bhutan</p> <p>7988
Aishvarya Shenoy (12)
A-6/11 Flat 30
Sawant Sadan
LIC Colony, Borivili (W)
Bombay 400103
Maharashtra, India
Dancing, modelling
India, Bhutan</p> <p>7989
Rohini Shenoy (9)
A-6/11 Flat No. 30
Sawant Sadan,
LIC Colony, Borivili (W)
Bombay 400103
Maharashtra, India
Dancing, singing
India, Bhutan</p> <p>7990
Rosalin Ghosh (13)
c/o H.D. Ghosh
Qr. No. J-39, H.A.L.
Township
Sunabeda 763002
Dist. Koraput
Orissa, India
Reading
Any country</p> <p>7991
Rakhi Talesra (14)
5/4 Old Fatehpura
Shankar Colony
Udaipur 313001
Rajasthan, India
Dancing, music
Any country</p> |
|--|---|---|

BOYS

7992 Deepak Gajner (11) Tomiyangsa Primary School Dist. Tashiyangtse P/O Duksum East Bhutan Reading, playing Any country	7/7 Old Double Storey Lajpat Nagar IV New Delhi 110024 Making friends India	c/o Sub. H.S. Dangwal G.T.T.R. 2 STC Ponda 403401 Goa, India Stamps & coins Any country
7993 Gagan (10) E-73, Naraina Vihar Delhi 110028 India Kite-flying, cricket Any country	7998 Dusu Sambyo (14) Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya Balijan, P/o Balijan Dist. Papumpare Arunachal Pradesh 791123 India Martial arts, reading Any country	8003 Pawandeep Singh (11) 21/10 Bharatam Apartments 1 Main Road Dr. Subaryan Nagar Kodambakkam Madras 600024 Tamil Nadu, India Sports, reading Any country
7994 Abhishek G. (16) F-10 Suvas Park Society New Sama Road Baroda, Gujarat, India Reading magazine, cricket Switzerland	7999 Sunny Dhall (12) E-D 48 Tagore Garden New Delhi 110027, India Cricket, stamps U.K., Japan	8004 Monti Jinggi (14) c/o G. Jinggi P/o Roing School V.K.V. Roing Dist. Dibang Valley Arunachal Pradesh 792110 India Playing, singing Any country
7995 C. Gopakumar E-48 Sanjay Colony Sector 23, N.I.T. Faridabad, Haryana India Cricket, stamps Any country	8000 Bini Amit (14) c/o Principal V.K.V. Sunpura P.O. Sunpura Dist. Lohit Arunachal Pradesh, India Stamps, letter-writing Any country	8005 Tony Pertin (13) c/o Yabing Pertin Vill. Yibuk, P.O. Roing Dist. Dibang Valley Arunachal Pradesh 791110 India Reading, cycling Any country
7996 Anubhav Vinayak (10) 4/104 Ramesh Nagar New Delhi 110015 India Stamps & coins, cricket Any country	8001 Vikas Goyal (16) 191 Khurbura Mohalla Dehra Dun 248001 U.P., India Pen-friendship, photography Any country	8006 Rishi Birla (15) BE-25 Janakpuri
7997 Anand Sharma (16)	8002 Mohan (16)	

BOYS

New Delhi 110058
Making friends, music
India

8007
Sunit Gupta (9)
1993 Paranthawali Gali
Kinari Bazar
Delhi 110006
Cricket, football
India

8008
Nityanand S. (13)
18/1 II Main Road
Nehru Nagar, Adyar
Madras 600020
Tamil Nadu, India
Singing, chess
U.S.A., India

8009
Mohit Gupta (11)
1993 Paranthawali Gali
Kinari Bazar
Delhi 110006, India
Singing
Any country

8010
Naveen Kumar (14)
V 52, Block No. 8
Lodhi Road Complex
New Delhi 110003
India
Reading, music
India, Europe

8011
Ritesh Pawan Tete (14)
L-78, RBI Quarters
Sarojini Nagar
New Delhi 110023
India
Painting, stamps
Mauritius

8012
Shiv Shambhu Tiwang (14)
c/o R. Tiwang
Karmik Nagar
Q.No. B/III/32, P.O. I.S.M.
Dhanbad, Bihar, India
Cricket, reading
Any country

8013
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8018
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Uttar Pradesh, India
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Badri Prasad Mata
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Chandni Chowk
Delhi 110006, India
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8021
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8023 Amogh Gupta (11) F-3/205 Charmwood Village Surajkund Road New Delhi 110044, India Playing, stamps U.S.A., Kuwait	8028 Manu Muraleedhar (16) Jyothirmani Sadanam P.O. Pattanakkad 688531 Alapuzha Dist. Kerala, India Reading, writing Any country	8033 Vishal M. Bellur (13) Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala Yadavgiiri 570020, Mysore Karnataka, India Reading, philately Any country
8024 Mukesh Chavda (12) c/o J.N.V. Vidyalaya Raman House Dist. Jamnagar Aliabada 361110 Gujarat, India Painting, pen-friends Any country	8029 Akshat K. (11) BJ 87, Shalimar Bagh (Poorvi) Delhi 110052, India Stamps & coins, pen-friends Oman, India	8034 Saiju Verghese (12) c/o Mr. C.G. Varghese Nahar Spinning Mills Ltd. 373 Industrial Area-4 Ludhiana 141003 Punjab, India Reading China
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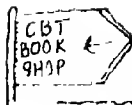
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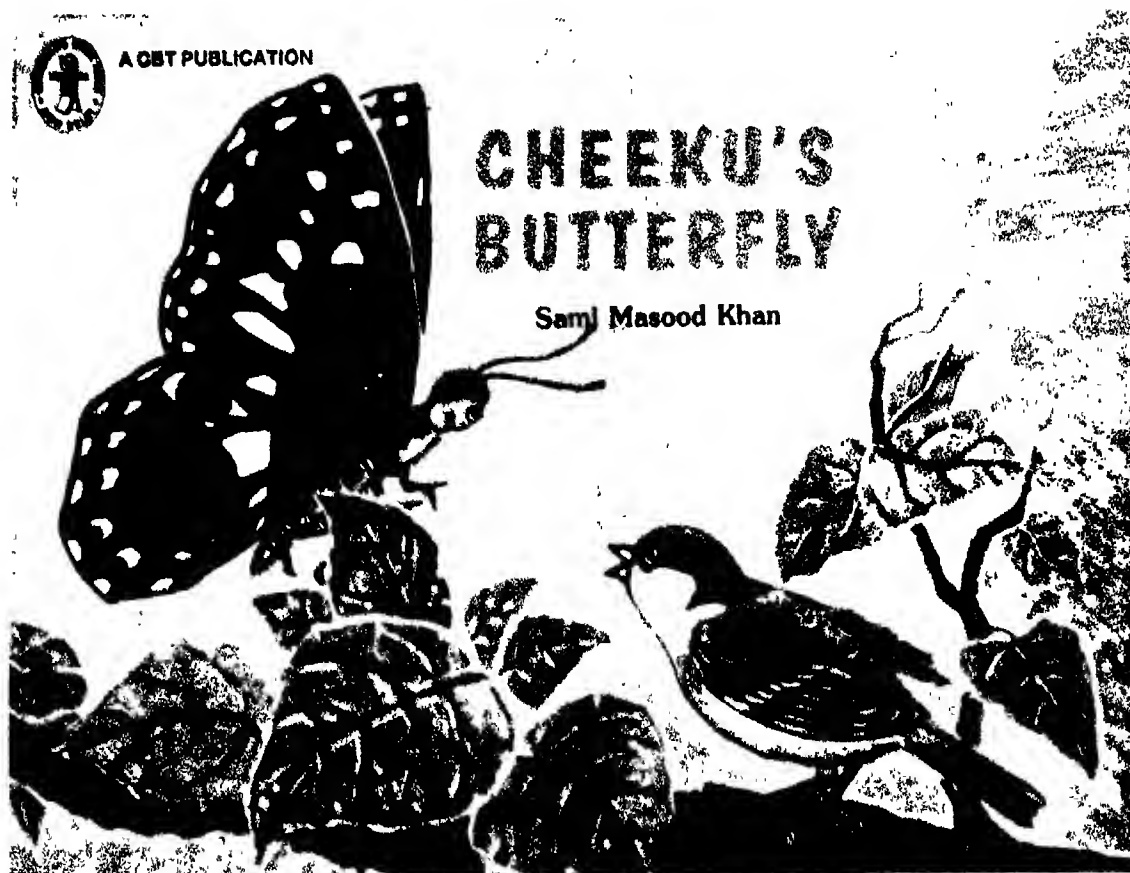
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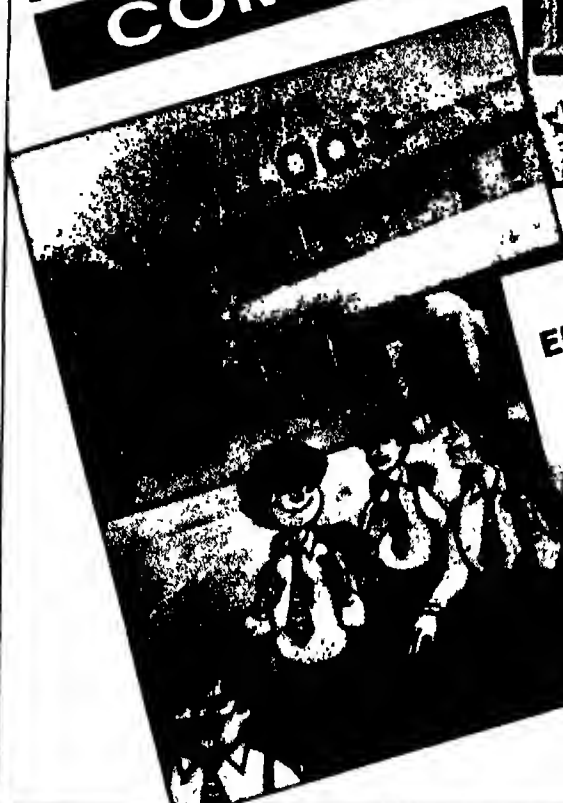


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APRIL 1996
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Madhavi Mahadevan

A LETTER TO YOU

DEAR TO EVERY GIRL: THE DOLL

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A FUNCTION FOR EVER

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For a long time as a child, I believed babies could stop wars. The day my youngest brother was born, a cease-fire was declared on the Indo-China war front. As a child, I had also observed that if adult voices were being raised in a room, and a child entered, they stopped abruptly. So, high on the power of childhood, my friends and I continued to live golden days full of carefree thoughts. Till one day a girls versus boys fight broke out in our otherwise placid class III. As an ultimate threat to those bullies, I told the boys my father was a senior army officer and he would make 'chutney' out of them.

The same evening communal riots broke out in the small town where we then lived, and the next morning we heard that our beloved *fruitwallah* had died in the firing.

No amount of tantrums, entreaties or tears could make my father pick up his service pistol "to go and get our fruitwallah's killers, or to finish off those horrid boys from our class". Even as he donned his uniform, for another day of work, red tape in his peak cap and the red pips glistening against the brass in his collar, he took pains to explain ... his shining sword and gleaming pistols

were not weapons of *vengeance, war and wounding*, they were arms that sometimes had to be used to preserve peace, to protect and guard. In that split second I grew up.

Suddenly I started noticing the injustices around me—images of war and communal intolerance on TV became real events. Wars, I realised, were no longer fought on war fronts in remote, mountainous areas, they came into drawing-rooms with deadly missiles and in one fell swoop killed, maimed, rendered homeless innocent women, children and old, helpless people.

Babies and children, I realised, were not, after all, as powerful as I had believed them to be. They, poor little ones, going by the sordid images of bleeding bodies and long rows of baby cots in temporary shelters and orphanages, were the victims.

As I sat that day in one long thoughtful recall, other images of unfairness, injustice on the basis of caste and creed caused whirlpools of distress in my mind. A sense of peace and well-being, it was beginning to dawn on me, was not sought for in war zones alone, but in the individual's mind, the family, the neighbourhood, the town, the city, the country, and the universe too.

Today, so many years later, violence seems to have become the norm you cannot escape, no matter where you are—and as letters, articles, poems and stories from adults and children, that reflect pain at the lack of peace in an otherwise beautiful world pour in, we cannot help but empathize with their feelings of helplessness.

Apart from asking them to "keep their heads even as others around them lose theirs" in a no-win situation, we also thought memory recall might help us pin-point what it is that upsets one's sense of peace. For this Annual Number, we asked a few well-known writers of children's stories, who have also been writing regularly for *Children's World*, to voice their deepest, darkest moments in childhood, when they had found their personal sense of peace disrupted.

"Thank-you," said one such writer, "for giving me this chance to unburden some thoughts that have been lying so heavy on my conscience for so many, many years." A sentiment echoed by all those who contributed to this issue.

In your hands, friends,
are some very tender, raw
emotions... fragments from
a not-forgotten childhood.
Handle them with care and
feeling, and write back to
us immediately about what
it made you feel...

Editor



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Story: Madhavi Mahadevan

Illustrations: Beejee

THE DAY before my Arithmetic test, Pakistan declared war on India. It was the winter of '71. I was nine years old. The next morning as we—Sajal, Vir and I—went to school, the atmosphere in the bus was charged with excitement. The subject under discussion was the previous day's attack.

"...sneaked in at 5.30 p.m., the radio said. I

heard it."

"Srinagar, Amritsar, Ambala, Uttarlai... They even came right upto Agra."

"Really? Did they get the Taj?"

"Naah. Missed. Anyway I've heard that the Taj has been camouflaged. It has been painted black."

"Someone please tell me how did the enemy planes manage to come so far into India. Agra's just 4

hours away..."

"They flew at tree top level, silly. Below the range of the radar. They got us by total surprise."

"Still... they couldn't hit even one fighter of ours. They lost four."

"We'll thrash them. We'll win. Take a bet, if you like."

"My dad said..."

Like us, most of the children in the bus had fathers who were in the

Army. Our *Baba*, a colonel, was away with his regiment at the front. Even when there was no war, *Baba* would rarely be at home for long. His regiment would be out on field manoeuvres for several months every year. Whether *Baba* was at home or not, *Ija*, our mother, made sure that we stuck to a routine laid down by her. Our meal times, play and study hours, twice-a-week music classes, riding and tennis lessons at the Institute were all part of the routine.

That morning *Ija* had called Sajal and me to her room. Sajal was two years older. Vir was only five. In her clear, no-nonsense way *Ija* said, "Our country is at war. Your *Baba* too is fighting. I don't want you to pay attention to rumours. I will tell you the news everyday. Don't worry. Keep your mind on doing well in the exams so that you can show *Baba* good report cards when he comes home."

As she said this *Baba's* face stared at us from the large, framed photograph on her bedside table. In uniform *Baba* looked stern and smart. Very different from the *Baba* who had taught us to ride our bicycles, taken us bird-

watching and who would laugh the loudest at his own jokes.

But *Ija's* words were in my ears as I stared at the sums on the blackboard. They were tough. I prepared to tackle them and all thoughts of war were pushed into the background.

On our return home we saw that the windows of our house had been papered. The rooms looked dark and mysterious. It was all quite exciting. At exactly 6 p.m. the siren went off.

"Air-raid!" yelled Sajal and dived below the cot. Vir promptly followed. Dolma, our black Lhasa Apso, resented this invasion of her territory. She wriggled out and began barking. *Ija* was cooking dinner in the kitchen. The commotion brought her to our room.

"Out!" she ordered the two pairs of feet sticking out below the cots.

"Air-raid, *Ija*!" yelled Vir. "Enemy! Bombs! Come here. We'll be safe." As an afterthought he added, "Bring a quilt. It's



cold on the floor."

Ija grabbed Sajal's foot and yanked hard. "It's not an air-raid," she said. "The siren is only to tell us that the black-out has started."

Sajal dashed across to the study-table and switched off the lamp, plunging the room in total darkness. *Ija* switched it on again and said, "No more monkey tricks, Sajal. Back to your books. Learn your Sanskrit."

Sajal looked disgusted. When she was safely out of hearing range, he muttered, "There's a war on. Real live action! And I have to study this... this Sanskrit. Who speaks it nowadays? Will it help me lead a sortie against the enemy? Or sink his submarines? Can I order an army to fight? In Sanskrit? Nobody would understand. Why I couldn't even buy eggs and bread if I were to use Sanskrit in the shop!"

"Sajal!" *Ija's* warning came to us. And Sajal went back to Sanskrit.

We listened to the news every night. True to her promise *Ija* would explain whatever we did not understand. She told us of the sinking of the *Ghazi*, of how many enemy planes had been shot

down and what had been said in the UN by the Indian representative.

Exams were over. The school had closed for a month. We spent days playing war games. Sometimes Dolma would be the enemy and sometimes Vir. Neither liked the role. Sajal was always the commander-in-chief. I was the Head Nurse of the Field Hospital. I liked that, because I could use my doctor-set.

The day we heard of how Indian Air Force fighters had downed the enemy's aircrafts after a bitter air-battle, there was no stopping Sajal. He read every word of the account in the newspaper and cut out the pictures of the enemy plane being blown to bits. He insisted on enacting the entire scene as if he himself had been in the cockpit of the Indian Gnat. Charged by all this, Vir ran up and down the garden flapping his arms and going "Zunnn... Thishoom... Bang bang. Got you, you dirty fella. Here, take this and this." He thrashed an imaginary enemy. We cheered.

Ija had gone out. We did not notice her return till suddenly she was in the middle of our new war

game. She grabbed Vir and glared at him. "I don't ever want to hear you say such things," she said in a hard, cold voice. Vir's face broke up. Sajal and I stared at her dumb-founded. Ignoring us she went to her room and closed the door.

That night at dinner, Sajal asked, "No bread rolls today?"

"No," said *Ija* curtly. "Have macaroni, instead."

It was a Wednesday. We had soup, bread and cutlets on Wednesday. Always.

"I don't like macaroni," said Sajal. He went to the sideboard to open the red and white bread box. It was empty.

"Didn't Allah Baksh *Chacha* bring bread today?" Sajal asked.

Allah Baksh, our breadwallah lived in Sadar Bazaar. As a young boy he had worked as a *khansama* for a British family. That was long ago. The family had gone back to England. But not before Allah Baksh had learnt how to bake crisp wheat biscuits, cream puffs, spongy fruit buns, breads and cakes. He had a small bakery in the bazaar. Every evening, from 4 p.m. onwards he would go around the cantonment

on his bicycle, with an old iron box strapped to the carrier. It would be filled with bread, cup cakes, biscuits and other goodies. He would reach our house at sunset, wash his hands and feet at the garden tap and spreading a white cloth on the soft grass under the *neem*, kneel down for *namaaz*.

While Allah Baksh prayed, we would sneak up to his bicycle, open the iron box and dig into it for a cream puff or a biscuit. One day we were caught red-handed by *Ija*. She was very angry. When Allah Baksh finished his *namaaz*, she made us stand in front of him and apologise. Allah Baksh smiled and gently said, "Let it be, *memsahib*. They are good children. They never take more than one or two biscuits. I know."

After that day, though we sometimes accepted biscuits from him, we never stole again.

Sajal repeated his question, "Didn't Allah Baksh *Chacha* deliver bread today?"

"No," said *Ija*. "He will not be coming for a few days. This morning his bakery was destroyed and he was badly roughed up."

Anticipating our ques-

tions she went on, "They caught the culprits—a mob of idle, young hoodlums. Someone, some evil person, spread the rumour that Allah Baksh is a spy. That's why they did it." She fell silent. After a while she said, "This war, the one your *Baba* is fighting, will come to an end, one day soon. But there is another war, an invisible war that we *all* have to fight, and keep fighting. The war against prejudice and intolerance. That is the only way we

can ensure that someone as simple and harmless like Allah Baksh will be allowed to live peacefully in this country."

Ija was right. The war of '71 ended. A cease-fire was declared exactly 14 days after the start of the war—on December 17. I still remember that day. India had won. Our *Baba* would soon be home. But now, twenty-five years later, I know that the other war, the one *Ija* talked about is still not over. One day, this too must end.





A LETTER TO YOU

Dear alerts and dis-alerts,

It must have been Raghu's idea, it couldn't have been anybody else's. What I mean to say is who else could have been so crazy, so daft as to suggest that... "I think it's a very good idea," said Mr. Krish. "In fact, it's excellent. For one hour tomorrow, the present monitor of this class will act as the Vice-Principal of the school. A superb idea."

Now the Vice-Principal of our school is Mr. Krish. So when he says something is a good idea, we all agree. Usually he's right too. But this time, this unfortunate time, the monitor of the class, the one who was to be *The Vice-Principal* of the school for an hour was—hold your breath—was Raghu. Raghu! That same stupid asinine ass who makes life miserable for me and for my ambitions, for my friends, for my work, he who is the enemy of my peace of mind, the co-villain of my brother, Raghu—Vice-Principal! Words failed me. I stared blankly at Mr. Krish as I think did all the rest of the fellows in class.

Commotion broke out when the bell rang. There

were chaps milling about up and down the stairs, there were chaps going hither and thither, bustling around, and on everyone's lips, there were the same two words—Raghu! V.P.! V.P.! Raghu! The noise was a combination of a high-powered plane taking off from an electric saw-mill in the middle of a thunderstorm. Raghu! V.P.! V.P.! Raghu!

And where you could ask was the aforementioned character himself? Where was the villain of the piece? Where was Raghu? Did you think he was working out complicated maths problems? Was he, perhaps, trying to invent a new device for a hair-cut that would be painless? Was he, by any chance, looking deeply into the skies to discover a new planet that would then be named after him?

Pah! Pah doubled! Pah! Pah! Pah, Raghu was, at that moment, sitting in the Principal's office, looking down at his wriggling feet. Raghu was, at that precise moment, sitting on the edge of a chair, facing the Principal and being scolded. Raghu, in fact, was getting the scolding of a lifetime.

Then, how, you might ask, would such a ruffian,

such a person who was being so thoroughly ground to the dust, how would such a poor specimen of boyhood be exalted to the post of Vice-Principal the next day, even for one brief hour? Ah! There lies the bitter irony of life, the danger in language itself, the deep error in human ways. Let me explain.

Raghu was in the Principal's office, being scolded, as I said. He was being scolded for a very small criminal act, small compared to what he is capable of doing. What happened was that Raghu was trying to educate some nincompoops on how to bowl a ball. I call them nincompoops because the nincompoops could have come to me and I could have... Anyway that is not what happened. What happened was that the ball flew out of Raghu's window, straight into the Principal's office, zoomed over his desk and into a tall, blue vase. The ball, in short, broke the vase into a thousand and three pieces and then lay quietly in a corner, licking itself for a good deed done.

Now you and I know that grown-ups, especially Principals, are very strange about things like



vases. They treat them like some kind of treasure or something. Anyway, Raghu was caught and brought into the Principal's office, like a prisoner escaped from a maximum security jail, and charged with the crime.

That is the good part of the story. The bad part of the story begins now.

As the Principal spoke to Raghu, telling him I suppose, of what a ghastly ink stain he was, what a miserable piece of creation, a beast on the planet earth and so on,

Mr. Krish walked into the room. Apparently, at this point, the Principal turned to Mr. Krish and asked, "What do we do with this highly irresponsible boy?"

At which, Raghu, who had not even been asked, apparently said, "Sir, I can learn responsibility if I can be the Principal!"

★

I don't quite know why the Principal agreed or why Mr. Krish decided that he would allow Raghu not to be Principal, but to be the Vice-Principal for an hour. The thing quite baffles me—perhaps Mr. Krish wants to go for a walk or something, or maybe he has a toothache and his mind is not functioning normally or... Oh yes, perhaps he wants Raghu to make more of a fool of himself. That's it! That must be it!

*Waiting with a quaking
heart for tomorrow
Perky*



DEAR TO EVERY GIRL the DO

Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

WITH HER mother, Sunita got into the bus. Mummy bought two tickets: one full—for herself, and the other half for the six-year-old girl.

“But you haven’t bought any for my doll,” said Sunita, looking at her rosy-cheeked toy.

“There are no tickets for dolls,” replied her mother.

“Why?” asked the girl.

“Because,” began her mother. She stopped short, for she was not sure what to say. In fact, it is not easy for anyone to explain this to a child.

To a little girl a doll is not just a toy. It is her companion, close companion. It may not talk or walk, but the girl thinks that it feels just as she

feels. She even speaks to it.

For that matter, many other toys are like that to all children. To them a hobby-horse is as good as a real horse.

It has always been so. Even in our age of computers and jet travel it is no different.

Every girl would like to have the best doll in the world. But that is not possible. However, many girls do have lovely dolls, or the dolls of their choice. The others have what they can afford or what they get.

But even a rag doll is as dear to its owner as an expensive doll is to a princess. Why, a poor girl loves her friend not the less than a rich girl does

hers!

Just as people have changed down the ages, so have dolls. And other toys too. In their own way toys mirror the changing times.

The doll’s dress, for example, has changed with the changing fashions. Medieval dolls were dressed the way men and women dressed in those days. So were the Victorian dolls in England, or the 19th century dolls anywhere else.

So are the modern dolls. However, the folk or traditional dolls have not changed much over the years.

One country’s dolls look a little different from another country’s dolls. This is because every



country has its own social and cultural life.

New kinds of dolls have also been made from time to time. Like the golliwog, the black-faced, brightly-dressed soft doll with fuzzy hair.

It was first made in the last century. The idea came from the doll of that name in a series of children's books in the U.S.A. The writer was Bertha Upton, and the illustrator Florence Upton.

In the 1960's troll dolls were popular. They had large eyes, bulging tummies and peculiar hair-dos. Then they went out of fashion. Now they are back.

And, as you know, Barbie is the doll of the day. Two other popular dolls are Christie and Brooke Shields.

New skills and new materials have also changed the look of the dolls over the centuries. For long, very long, the dolls were made of clay, wood, grass, stone, metal, cloth and wool.

Jute and other fibres, wax, leather, porcelain, papier mache and plaster of Paris were also used. A new addition was rubber.

All these materials are still used. But more in use

than these is plastic. Some of them close or blink their eyes. Some others move their limbs, squeak, cry and even croon.

Whatever changes the doll has gone through, the doll remains a doll—a human figure, loved and played with as before.

Some girls have small beds or cradles for their dolls. Some others have small wardrobes. Yet others have doll's houses—pretty little or picture-perfect rooms or cottages with tiny furniture and other things.

Like the dolls, doll's houses and the things inside have also changed down the years.

Some boys and girls make curious dolls. They draw a face on the thumb of their left hand and wrap a strip of cloth round it in such a way that the thumb looks a cute little doll.

Doesn't it remind you of Thumbelina? Also of Tom Thumb and hop-o'-my-thumb?

Or they draw a face on a discarded sketch-pen cap and dress the body colourfully like a doll.

Or they make a sock doll. They take an old sock, cut it and stuff it with cotton or rags. Then



they squeeze the top into a neck and add eyes, nose and mouth on the face.

And, of course, they decorate it with ribbons and other things.

Or they make a wool doll-pin to wear on their dress.

Some people take ideas for decorative things from dolls.

They make paper-weights, door handles and fancy candles in the form of dolls. And they paint dolls on hand-bags and biscuit or chocolate cartons.

Doll-makers themselves take pains in dressing up and decorating the dolls. Or the girls do it on their own. Apart from bright and shimmering clothes,

they make or buy gleaming glass bead jewellery, for their dolls.

That is why 'doll' also means an attractive, stylish girl and 'to doll up' means to dress smartly.

Many girls change their doll's dress according to the season or the occasion. When they pretend that it is the wedding of their dolls, they go in for finery and other showy things.

Often at the wedding the girls too wear their best. They sing songs. There are mock marriage rites. Then there is a party or feast.

In some cases the bride doll goes to her new home.

Dolls have always inspired writers. In the past they mostly figured

in poems and stories. Poems and stories are written about them now too. In fact, more than ever before.

But there is a lot more writing as well. There are books on toys. These have chapters on dolls. Some books are all about dolls, past and present. There are also books on doll-making.

Oh, You Beautiful Doll by Yvonne Rawstron is a book of high fashion for dolls. It tells how girls can design casual wear, jogging suits, lingerie, evening gowns and wedding dresses for their 29 cm Barbie and other dolls.

Almost every encyclopedia has an article on toys and dolls. Papers and magazines publish features on dolls and making dresses for dolls. They also carry ads about toys and dolls.

Then there are special articles and books on toys as teaching aids. And on the child's attachment to her doll. This is a separate branch of study in psychology.

A little more about Barbie. This is one doll which has been talked and written about and has been in the news more than any other doll.

There is a biography of this doll too. *Forever Barbie* by M.G. Lord came out towards the end of 1994.

Here is Barbie's *curriculum vitae*—brief account. Name: Barbie. Date of birth: March 9, 1959. Profession: mannequin. Height: 29 cm or 11½ in. Hair: blonde. Eyes: blue. Star sign: Pisces.

Yes, Barbie is a mannequin—a girl engaged by a dress-maker to display clothes by wearing them.

As such, she is not a chubby baby doll you see with most girls, but a tall, slim teenager.

Barbie is made by the Mattel Company of America. The idea, it is said, came from a German doll. But she has left the original far behind. Millions of Barbie dolls have been sold since.

Also millions of pairs of the shoes and dresses she wears and the other things she has. She follows all new fashions.

There are the Barbie family dolls and pets as well. She has a schoolgoing sister, Skipper. Also a boyfriend, Ken. One of her versions is Flight Time Barbie in the outfit of an air hostess. There is Dr. Barbie too.

In India Barbie comes in all her various forms, and also in a Kanjivaram sari. The latest is Bicyclin' Barbie.

Add to these Barbie comics and Barbie colouring books.

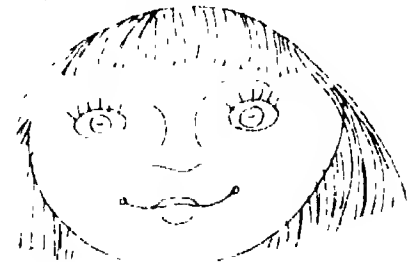
Never before has a doll sold so much and in so many countries. Barbie is truly international.

Though she is the craze, Barbie has her critics too. Some women's groups have protested against her. Some others say that Barbie is not as satisfying as other dolls are.

Whatever the praise or protest may be, one thing is certain. Barbie is expensive. Her dresses and other things make her the more so. Most children cannot afford her.

This brings us to our own dolls. They come in a price range that suits most pockets. And they satisfy them in other ways.

Or how nice it is to have a doll which an aunt or grandma lovingly makes for you.



I WAS IN the seventh standard of a school run by the Tamil Association in Nagpur. On that day our maths teacher, Mr. Tambe, was trying to drill the mysteries of time and distance into our unreceptive brains, especially mine, since maths was not one of my favourite subjects. So when the peon came in followed by a girl, I instantly perked up.

She was a new student. I looked at her. She was so dark that she looked almost black—a shiny black at that. Her hair was oily and pulled back into a tight plait, ending in a red ribbon.

My benchmate was absent that day and Sir asked her to sit next to me. I was not at all happy about it. She gave an uncertain smile while sitting down. She smelt of oil and her skirt was very dirty.

Saroja was a bad student and did not seem to understand any subject except Tamil. This was mainly because she could not understand English, which was the medium of instruction. She knew no



Story: Thangamani

Illustrations: Beejee

Hindi either. Her appearance, which branded her as a rustic South Indian, completed her misery. There were a lot of Tamils in our class — 12, to be precise. But none of us wanted to be associated with her. I suffered enormous pangs of guilt about ignoring her, though.

On that first day, I asked her about herself. She came from a colony of stone quarry workers and her parents were labourers at the quarry. They had only recently come to Nagpur from a drought-ridden district of Tamil Nadu in search of work. Since our school got aid from the government of Tamil Nadu, any student from that State was to be admitted. That is how Saroja and her two brothers got in.

The boys and girls teased and taunted her—about her hair, skin colour, dirty dress... She kept quiet. Never once did she reply in anger or display any emotion. She spoke very little. I was the only one whom she talked to and that too only if she wanted some copy or the other. She ate her lunch alone. No one thought of calling her to join us.

When my benchmate, Sudha, came back, Saroja

had to be given another place. She ended up in the last row. She did not protest. I hated her for her apathy. When teachers scolded her for her poor performance, she bore it quietly. Mr. Tambe, who was also our class teacher, was the hardest on her. He regularly whacked her on her palms, for some lapse or the other. When he demanded that she show her palm, she would silently hold it out. As days went by, I got madder and madder—whether at her, the teachers or at the students who were mean to her, I do not know.

“Do you know her people eat rats?” Raman, the biggest bully in the class, asked one day during lunch.

My mother had given me cutlets and I was savouring them when he made the announcement. I almost choked on my next mouthful.

“Who said that?” asked Kumud, carelessly biting into a sandwich.

“Raman is right. Why else would she eat her grub alone?” reasoned Veena.

“Roast rats in tomato sauce. Mmm...” said Raman, licking his fingers. By then, my appetite

had vanished. I looked to where Saroja was sitting under a tree, her aluminium tiffin box open before her. She put her hand into it and took out the food, shoving it into her mouth. Suddenly I made up my mind. I closed my own box and got up.

“Hey, where are you going?” asked Raman.

I did not reply. I hurried over to the place where Saroja was sitting and sat with her. “Can I eat with you?” I asked. Too surprised to refuse, she nodded. Now that I was sitting with her, I didn’t know what to say. I went on eating quietly.

“Did you quarrel with your friends?” she asked me suddenly.

I looked over at the group I had left and saw that everyone was staring at us. “Of course not. I want to sit with you, that’s all,” I said.

I don’t know what I had expected to find in her lunch box. She was eating her boiled rice with something. It looked black and shiny. It was brinjal. But to my eyes it looked like... rats? I choked back the nausea rising in my throat and closed my lunch box. I could not eat any more. Again I felt the familiar



anger at her apathy.

"Do you know what the others say about you?" I asked her, frowning. She nodded. "You do? Then why don't you ever fight back?"

"I can't." She bent her head and went on eating. "It is difficult being poor and a bad student on top of that..."

"Can't? What do you mean, can't? You are afraid, sissy!" I was vehement.

"...no one likes me, not

the students, not the teachers," she murmured to herself as if she had not heard my interruption.

It was then that I looked at her properly. Her school uniform was pretty dirty, the white blouse had an oily patch at the back where her plait rubbed against it. Her dark blue skirt was soiled. Obviously she had only one dress, and so could not afford to wash it during the week. Her face and hands were well

scrubbed though, her teeth were the whitest I had seen. And her eyes...were clear, honest and friendly.

On an impulse I said, "Shall we walk back together in the evening?" The hill beyond which her house lay, was about a kilometre from my house. She nodded. Again, I felt the anger well up in me. Here I was, trying to be friendly and all she did was nod. The least she could do was show some

emotion, joy at being noticed by someone. The hill-billy!

"What were you saying to blackie?" asked Kumud who was sitting with me that day. And then added, "Was she really eating rats?"

I turned to her. It was as if I was seeing her for the first time in my life. And I had known her for at least 10 years of my life—ever since we joined the nursery. Had she always been so insensitive? Cruel?

"Yes. I tasted some and it was delicious. I am walking back home with her today," I said in as icy a voice as possible. I turned back to my book.

I felt Kumud stiffen. "If you like the smell of stale sweat and castor oil and, of course, the taste of rats, you should go with her. As for me I don't want to ever speak to you!"

I was furious. I picked up my books and went to the third desk where Seema was sitting alone. She moved over. Fortunately she did not ask me why I had changed places.

By evening, I had begun hating Saroja in right earnest. Why did she have to come and disturb my peace of mind? Here I was, happy and secure in

my world from where poverty and privation looked far removed. And now I was more than uncomfortable at being confronted by it, day in and day out. To make matters worse, the hill beyond which she lived was visible from our house. It could not have been more than a kilometre away.

In the evening, Saroja came over to my desk and stood silently. Dammit! Couldn't she even open her mouth?

I did not look up, but picking up my bag, made for the door. "Girija!" she called timidly. "You said..."

"I may have said a thousand things. That doesn't mean I have to do them," I said rudely and walked away. I could feel her staring expressionlessly at my back. Tears pricked my eyes. I didn't know why I was crying—at my callousness, her apathy or my friends' taunts.

Back home, I kept looking at the hill and imagining the life of the people who lived beyond it. I could hear the whirr of the stone-grinding machines and the dull echo of hundreds of stone hammers that kept breaking up the hill, slowly.

And I kept seeing the dark, impassive faces of Saroja and her brothers, as they walked tall with their eyes staring straight ahead.

Mother had gone out and would be returning with father. I had about three to four hours before they returned. I locked the house and left the key with a neighbour, telling her that I was going to my friend's house. I started towards the hill. I didn't know why I was going there, nor how I would find Saroja's house. It was as if I was being pulled by invisible strings. Had Saroja really worked some black magic on me? I didn't know.

It took me about an hour to climb the hill and reach the other side. In the distance, I saw a group of small thatch huts, some with tin roofing. Several large stone grinders were breaking up the stones into small pieces. The hillside was dotted with several dozens of men and women who were chipping away at the rocks with their small hammers. The steady beat of so many hammers was rhythmic in a sad sort of way. I kept walking towards the huts, mesmerised by the scene.

Children were playing in the filth, in various stages of undress, some even going naked. Older children were filling water from a tap in assorted cans and buckets. Some were washing clothes, others were cleaning vessels, some girls were preparing to cook. There were dirty puddles everywhere and mosquitoes buzzed in my ears.

"Girija!" I was startled out of my reverie. Saroja stood there, a snot-nosed baby on her hips, her hand holding a can of kerosene. "Did you want to see me about something?" she asked.

"I just felt like climbing the hill, and I thought I could visit you too," I said without much grace. She started walking and I followed. No welcome, no joy at seeing a classmate. I soon noticed—no embarrassment either. I mean, I would have died of shame had a classmate come to my home when it was untidy or in a mess. But Saroja was just matter-of-fact about my visit. The small shack was clean and as tidy as any shack could be, with an uneven mud floor and assorted tin sheets for walls and roof. She pulled out a threadbare mat for me to sit on.



"Do you all live here?" I asked. She nodded.

"You asked me today why I don't fight those who insult me. I'll tell you why. Our parents don't want us to study. It is with great difficulty that they have agreed to send us to school. But, if there was to be any kind of trouble, our father would stop us from attending school. My brothers and I have therefore agreed to just ignore everything and only study. But studies

here are so different from what we have done in Tamil Nadu that we are finding it difficult. We try so hard..."

It was a long speech by her standards. I was dumbstruck. I never realised things could be this bad. I had only thought of Saroja as being too sissy to fight the bullies. I felt sick. I had been one of them too. In fact I still was, for all practical purposes.

I looked at her face—

glistening black, expressionless. But now I knew it was a mask that hid hurts and was afraid to make a wrong move that could mean the end of her education. I felt very small and ashamed. I wanted to say sorry, but didn't know how. I felt uncomfortable in that shack, but I sat for at least half an hour more.

Something had changed for me that day. The students did not change their attitude or behaviour with her, but instead of getting mad at Saroja, I now understood her silence. Kumud still refused to talk to me, but it did not hurt so much. I had discovered a human side to my nature and was determined not to lose it, ever.

★

A few days ago, I was talking to some school children who were about the same age as I was then. During the course of the conversation, I mentioned the sight I had once seen, of a rag-picker fighting for a scrap of food with a mongrel. Several of them laughed. I had expected various reactions, but laughter was definitely not one of them. It immediately brought to mind the above incident.

Children, as babies, are affectionate and do not let things like the appearance or clothes of a person prejudice their attitude. Why then, when they grow up and reach adolescence, do they develop an insensitive streak and even turn cruel? Being born on the wrong side of

the social fence is no laughing matter. Can poverty and destitution ever be put in proper perspective, so that children learn to reach out rather than shun... to evaluate character as something beyond appearances... to look at the less fortunate with just that much of tolerance...?



A Function for Ever

A report on the 46th Shankar's International Children's Competition Prize Distribution

New Delhi, February 23. 5.00 p.m. Mavalankar Hall. The Vice-President of India, K.R. Narayanan, arrives and garlands five children on stage as the audience breaks out into applause. This is the time-honoured way the Chief Guest at the Shankar's International Children's Competition Prize Distribution function greets the children who conduct the proceedings before an assembly of prize-winners, parents and members of the Diplomatic Corps. The 46th Prize Distribution function of SICC was no different. The five children on stage were Rahul Iyer, Kristen Jain, Abhishek Sanyal, Maitreye Shivakumar and Neelabh Tripathi.

"With my hands joined together in the traditional Indian style of greeting, I welcome you to this function, which means so much to us children in India and others like us the world over..." Rahul

Iyer set the ball rolling for the evening.

After the welcome, Kristen Jain read out a report of the achievements of SICC in 1995. For this competition SICC received 1,60,000 entries in painting and writing, of which 875 were selected for prizes. About 100 countries including Belgium, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Macedonia, Peru, Slovenia, Tunisia and Zimbabwe participated. Eighteen Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Gold Medals were given—two for writing and 16 for painting.

The Vice-President then released the 46th volume of the Shankar's Children's Art Number, the colourful compendium of prize-winning writings and paintings. As Kristen Jain said, "... This Volume... illustrates how children the world over think and feel with one heart, one mind..."

That over, the President of the function, Abhishek Sanyal, addressed the gathering, "The keenly-contested elocution competition I went through...feels like child's play in comparison to standing here to deliver the Presidential address... In my hour of glory...there is nothing better I would like than the assurance that this moment be frozen in time. That speakers may come and speakers may go, but that this function will go on forever. So that tomorrow, I too may sit among the audience and watch other children, maybe my own and my children's children, conduct this ceremony and think to myself, 'I too was a link in the chain of this great tradition'..."

Then came forward the Ambassadors and other members of the Diplomatic Corps, to collect prizes on behalf of the children of their countries.

*(Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial
Gold Medallist 1995)*

Grey Cloud Has a Silver Lining

*Night seems to overshadow the day, but
one thing you must remember,
That impenetrable dark is terminated, by
a solitary burning ember.
Every riddle can be fathomed, every
mystery can be delved,
Every quandary can be probed into,
darkness can be dispelled.
So just redeem yourself, and acquire a
feeling of courage,
Then a brighter day, you shall surely
envisage though you are alone in your
endeavour, and no one seems to join,
Just remember felicity and melancholy
are two sides of a coin.
So have faith in yourself, and keep
surging forward,
For he who attempts is brave, not a
coward.
Though you couldn't get what you
yearned for, despite endless pining,
Just remember, my friend, every cloud has
a silver lining.*

Next it was the moment of glory for the children, some of who had travelled miles, to receive their awards in person from the Vice-President of India, watched by loving, caring members of their families.

The two prize-winners from abroad were Tonmoy Quader from Bangladesh who won a Jawaharlal

Nehru Memorial Gold Medal for a painting, and Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla from Abu Dhabi who won a Silver Medal for a written entry. Also present was J. Ramkumar from Delhi who won a Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Gold Medal for his collection of poems. There were others who had come

from Gujarat, Kerala, West Bengal—about 100 children in all.

Following the Vice-President's speech, Maitreye Shivakumar in her Vote of Thanks said, "...By a happy coincidence, India has been in the grip of an international fever for some time now. The World Book Fair has just

A Memorable Evening

Merin E. Kuruvilla
(Silver Medallist 1994, 1995)



... I was absolutely thrilled to receive my medals for the years '94 and '95. I was really, really glad to be part of the audience. The evening was truly memorable ... one of the best in my life. The feeling of boundless joy that permeated the occasion was due to one great man—Uncle Shankar who helped create a sense of oneness among children in more than a 100 countries.

Let us hope it continues for generations, more generations and still more generations yet to come.

Noise Pollution at Home

*If I find a quiet moment to rest
Or write a little rhyme
And the pencil is touching the paper
My sis bawls just in time
The loud ringing and disturbance
Coming from the telephone
And Sunny crashing the keys of the piano
Harsh and out of tone.
The maid switches on the vacuum cleaner
Dad drills the walls to hang a picture
Here comes Aunt's piercing scream*

*Guess noise at home is a permanent
fixture.
Both volumes are turned up
Of the radio and television
Gosh, doesn't Mom even care
About the increase of noise pollution.
Then the next-door kid begins to yell
Just when everything is quiet and clear
I guess it will not be long before
This generation will be deaf and cannot
hear.*

concluded and cricket matches for the World Cup are being played. So another event of the same stature, with children at the helm, is certainly a matter of pride. And am I proud to be a part of this august gathering... You may not be aware of this but to us children receiving a prize from the

Vice-President of India was like being honoured by the country herself..."

On February 25, the day after the Prize Distribution, the prize-winners were invited to a reception at Nehru House. Here, putting the formality of the previous day behind them, the prize-winners mingled with one another,

admiring the award-winning paintings displayed on the walls of the library, exchanging addresses, autographs, promising to keep in touch with each other and also to continue writing and painting, to work—encouraged by prizes instituted by Shankar—for greater laurels.

(Pictures on inside covers)



Dear Children

VISIT

NATIONAL RAIL MUSEUM, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi

The place that is Educative, Informative & Entertaining

WE ARE OPEN BETWEEN 9.30 a.m- 5.00 p.m daily except Mondays

We give 50% Concession to School groups above 30

WE PROMISE
It will be a day you will remember

CROSSROADS 4

Collectively Yours!

S.S.

Continuing our series of crosswords, 'Collectively Yours!' deals with groups of animals and birds. Watch out! For quite a few of them reveal traits of the creatures they name. Unscramble the anagrams!

CLUES

Across

- 3 A p... of owls
(LMAATEPNIR)
4 A s... of bears
(HTSOL)
5 A t... of kangaroos
(ROPTO)
8 A n... of mice (SETN)
10 A c... of partridges
(VCYEO)
11 A m... of storks
(NESGIMTRU)
13 A l... of cubs or pups
(TRELTI)
14 A s... of herons
(EEIGS)
15 A w... of nightingales
(THWAC)
17 A s... of foxes (LKSSU)

- 21 An a... of frogs (RYMA)
22 An u... of ravens
(NNNSKESUDI)
24 A f... of swallows
(ITGLFH)
25 A g... of geese on water
(EGGALG)
26 A d... of squirrels
(ARYD)
27 A c... of hummingbirds
(RCHIMA)

Down

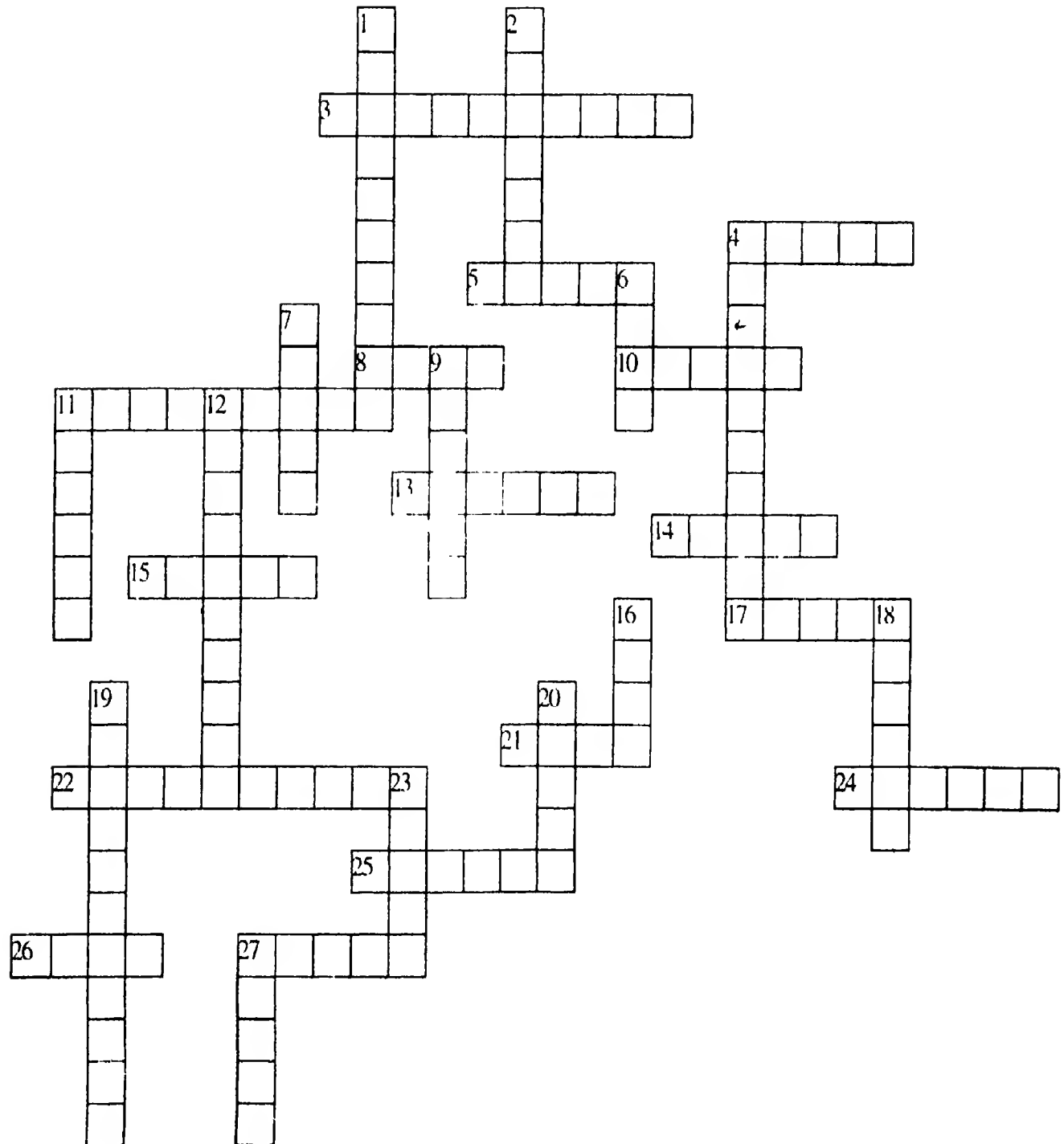
- 1 A c... of starlings
(ENCTGIARTH)
2 A c... of rooks
(RAOLUMC)
6 A p... of wolves
(KPCA)

- 7 A t... of monkeys
(ITEBR)
9 A s... of racehorses
(GTNIRS)
11 A m... of crows
(RRDUME)
12 An e... of larks
(TNXILOAAET)
16 A b... of quails (YEVB)
18 A k... of kittens
(EIDKLN)
19 A c... of eagles
(VACNOOITNCO)
20 A d... of asses
(RVODE)
23 A s... of bees
(ASMRW)
27 A c... of rhinos
(SHRCA)

Hurry up and send in the completed crossword! Last date for receiving entries: April 15, 1996. The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year gift subscription to Children's World. Answers and results in the June 1996 issue.
Congratulations, R. Rohit, New Delhi! Winner of Crossroads 2, 'Historically Yours'!

CROSSROADS 4

Collectively Yours!



It's good to learn how to smile



It's good to learn how to save

The habit of savings is inherent in all of us.
Whether collecting seashells on the beach. Or,
collecting coins in one's piggy bank.

And even while you are growing, you can open a
Children's Savings Account with **ALLAHABAD**
BANK and see your money grow. With a Passbook
and a cheque book to feel proud of and grown up
like your dad.

The habit of savings. Make it happen with
ALLAHABAD BANK.



ALLAHABAD BANK
2, Netaji Subhash Road, Calcutta-700001.

Story: Dipavali Debroy
Illustrations:
Viky Arya

...and the baby Crow?

IT WAS A rose-pink evening three decades ago, and I was holding my granduncle's hand as he took me on a walk through the neighbourhood. As a kid, I was addicted to those evening walks. Part of it was the joy of stepping out into the busy streets of Calcutta, and part of it was the promise of the story granduncle told me—a new one every time. I never missed my walk, and got quite cross if sometimes granduncle, *Dadua* to me, did not feel equal to the task of taking me out.

It was one such evening, and I was trotting along with *Dadua*, listening happily to a much abridged version of *Ben-Hur*. We usually kept to the pavement. Calcutta streets have always been busy.

Suddenly, I came to a stop.

Dadua who was looking ahead, pulled at me.

I did not move.

Dadua was forced to look down as well. At the spectacle I could not tear myself away from.



It was a dead crow. Lying on the edge of the pavement, overlooking the dirty asphalt below. Lying with legs outstretched and one wing almost torn away.

"Chhah," *Dadua* exclaimed in disgust. "Come away. At once."

"It's dead, isn't it?" I asked.

"Yes. Some scamp must have hit it with a catapult."

"Is it a Mummy-bird or a Daddy-bird, *Dadua*?" I asked.

"A Mummy-bird," *Dadua* said, without even looking. His eyes were again on the road.

"Then there must be a baby-bird as well?" I continued.

"Of course, there must," said *Dadua*. "Now, come along."

"But, *Dadua*, if the Mummy-bird is dead, what will the baby-bird do? What is going to happen to the baby-bird?" I persisted.

Dadua did not answer, but pulled me along with him. He resumed his story. Busy people and noisy traffic engulfed the two of us.

But soon I asked him again, "What will happen to the baby-crow, *Dadua*, now that the Mummy-

crow is dead?"

Dadua did not pay much attention initially, and tried to go on with whatever story he was telling. But I kept on popping the same question to him, and in the end he was forced to take notice.

Usually a placid child who looked perfectly content with the world around her, I was looking most different. My eyebrows were puckered and eyes worried.

"Can you guess what Ben-Hur did next?" *Dadua* tried to distract me.

But I did not respond. "What will happen to the baby-crow?" I asked again.

"You are really worried about it, aren't you?" smiled *Dadua*. "Forget it. Let's go to the park and sit down."

In the heart of all that traffic, there was a triangular park—a stretch of green with black railings. We entered it and sat down.

We were in the habit of doing so. Almost every evening, half-way through the walk, *Dadua* and I would settle down there. We would watch the setting sun, slipping quietly behind the tall buildings. *Dadua* would

point out the stars, popping out of the pale blue sky. Elderly men, taking their walk—would pass by and nod at *Dadua*, or even pause to exchange a few friendly words or to pinch my cheeks. The breeze would grow cooler, the sky would go indigo blue, and *Dadua* would say, "Come, let's get up. It's time to get back home."

But that peaceful pattern had somehow been disturbed. I just did not let *Dadua* go on with his story, or have a chat with a friend. Every now and then, I kept on asking about that baby-bird—whose mother I had seen lying dead and bloodied on the pavement.

"What WILL happen to it, *Dadua*? What do YOU think?" I asked for the twentieth time.

Patiently, my grand-uncle tried to figure it out. "Perhaps the baby-bird is big enough to fend for itself," he responded.

"Perhaps it is not. And then? It will get so hungry, waiting in the nest for its Mummy."

"Well, some Mummy-bird in a nest nearby may give it some tidbits from what she brings for her own babies," suggested *Dadua*.

"But how can you be



'sure that there are nests nearby?"

"Oh, one can be pretty sure. A tree has so many branches. There may be a nest on every branch," said *Dadua*.

"But this crow may not have nested on a tree," I retorted. "She may have made her nest in an alcove or a roof-top, and she may have been the only bird to have done so. She may have had no neighbours."

Looking at my screwed-up face, *Dadua* tried another line.

"What about the people who stay in that house? The house whose alcove or roof-top the Mummy-bird had chosen? I am positive that people there are kindly and will take care of the baby-crow which has been left an orphan."

"But suppose they are not kindly? Suppose they are the very people who have hit the Mummy-crow?" was my question. "And what if it is an office—the house where the nest is? Then there won't be any people around to help the baby-crow out."

After a point, my grand-uncle gave up. He sighed and got up. We left the park, now full of the cries of homing birds. *Dadua*

resumed the retelling of Ben-Hur's adventures, but I could not focus on them. Dragging my feet, brows knit together, restless and preoccupied, I retraced my steps homewards.

The dead crow was still there on the pavement. Someone had unknowingly stepped on it and it was pressed flat—a horrible, squashed mass. *Dadua* tried to yank me away. But I took a good look at it.

Then I cried out, "Why, of course, *Dadua*, I have got it. The baby crow will also die. Without its Mummy, it will just die, I am sure."

I looked up into a face full of embarrassment and pain. *Dadua* was at a loss for words.

But I had found the solution to my problem. My brow was smooth again. "Now tell me what Ben-Hur did," I said.

Dadua had lost the thread of the story. But I insisted, "Come on, *Dadua*, you haven't finished!" Soon I was racing chariots with Ben-Hur, totally engrossed in Roman times. I never asked about the baby-bird again. Not once on the way back. Not in the night at dinner, or at bedtime. Not the next day. Not ever.

Why did I not ask about it? I have no answer. Was it that the thought of a helpless baby is less disturbing than that of a dead one? Is it that the idea of suffering that violates one's sense of peace, and not that of actual death which takes one beyond suffering? Why, at the age of six or seven—and with a full complement of parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, granduncles and grandaunts—did I

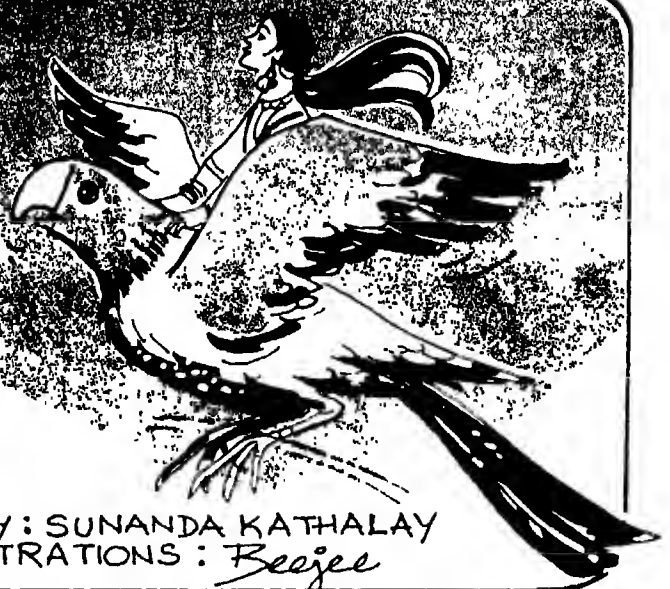
stumble on that train of thought? Why was I so bothered that evening? Why did I forget my worries as soon as I had hit upon that particular solution? No, I am afraid I do not know the answer.

All I know is that, even today, when I hear of an untimely death in the family or among friends, or of devastation in distant Bosnia, I feel like crying out, "But what is going to happen to the baby-birds helpless in their nests?"



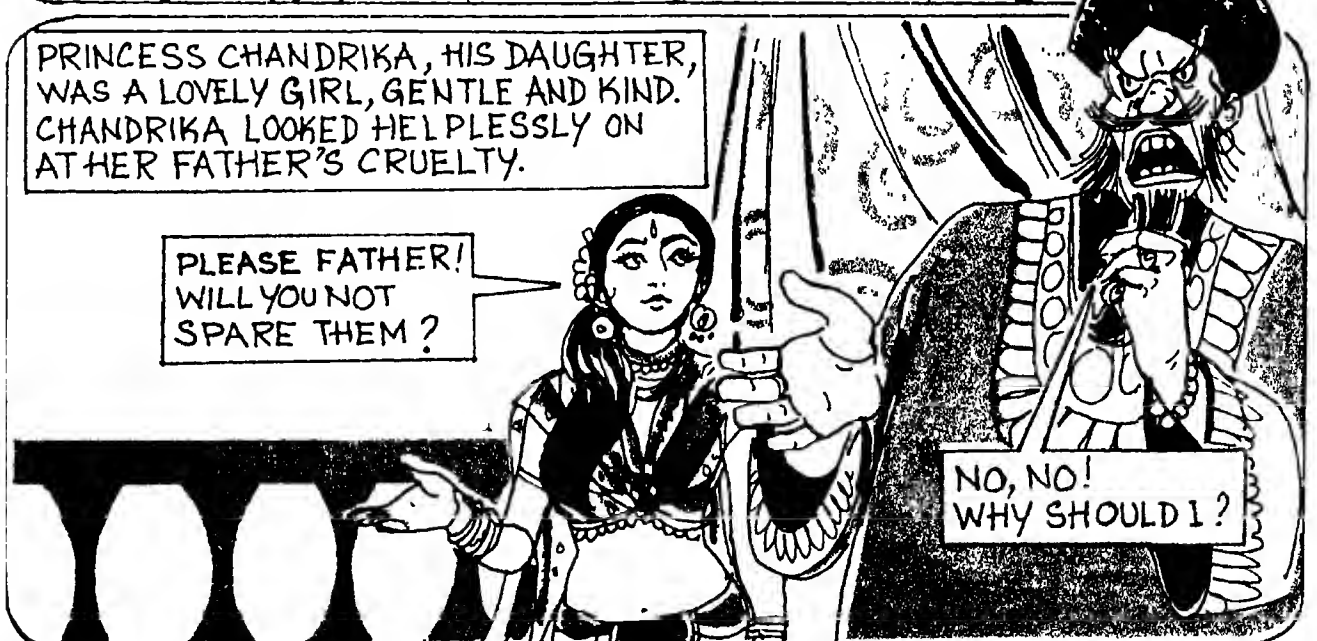
The Princess and the Parrot

STORY : SUNANDA KATHALAY
ILLUSTRATIONS : *Beejee*



KHADUS RAJA WAS A
CRUEL KING. WHEN HE
GOT ANGRY, HE PUNISHED
PEOPLE MERCILESSLY.

GIVE HIM
50 LASHES.



PRINCESS CHANDRIKA, HIS DAUGHTER,
WAS A LOVELY GIRL, GENTLE AND KIND.
CHANDRIKA LOOKED HELPLESSLY ON
AT HER FATHER'S CRUELTY.

PLEASE FATHER!
WILL YOU NOT
SPARE THEM?

NO, NO!
WHY SHOULD I?

ONE DAY A TRAVELLER
CAME THERE. HE HAD
A TALKING PARROT
WITH HIM.

HALLO! GOOD MORNING!
HOW ARE YOU?

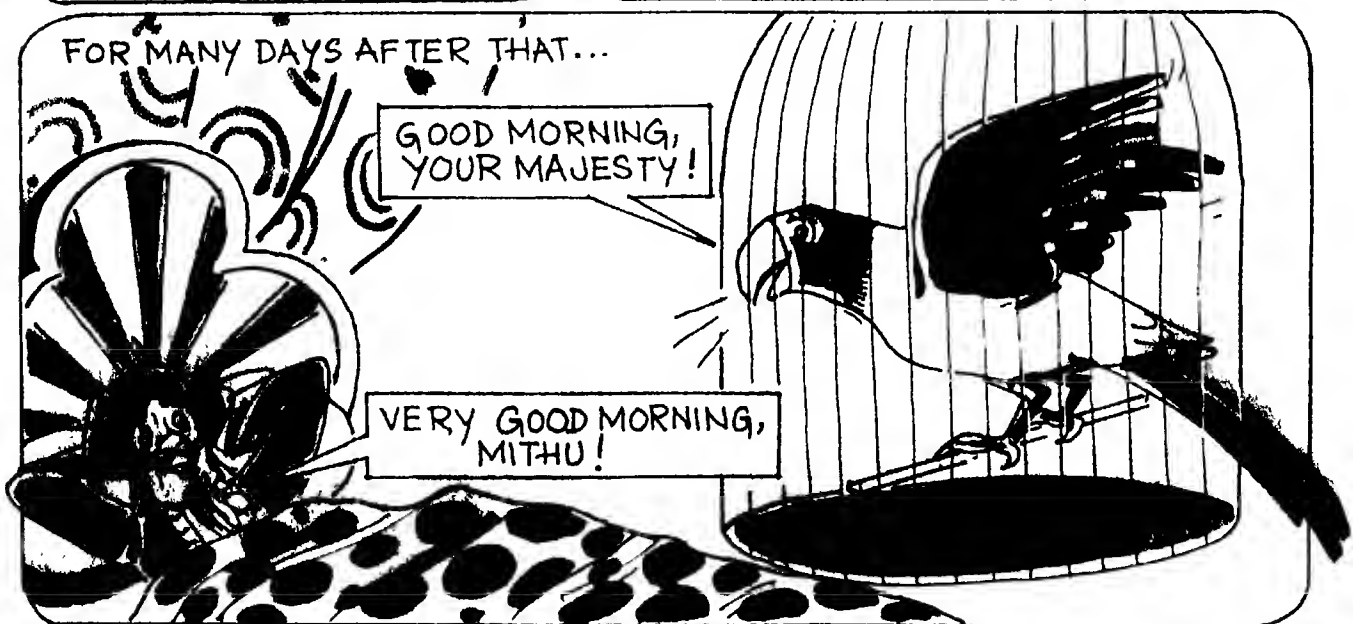
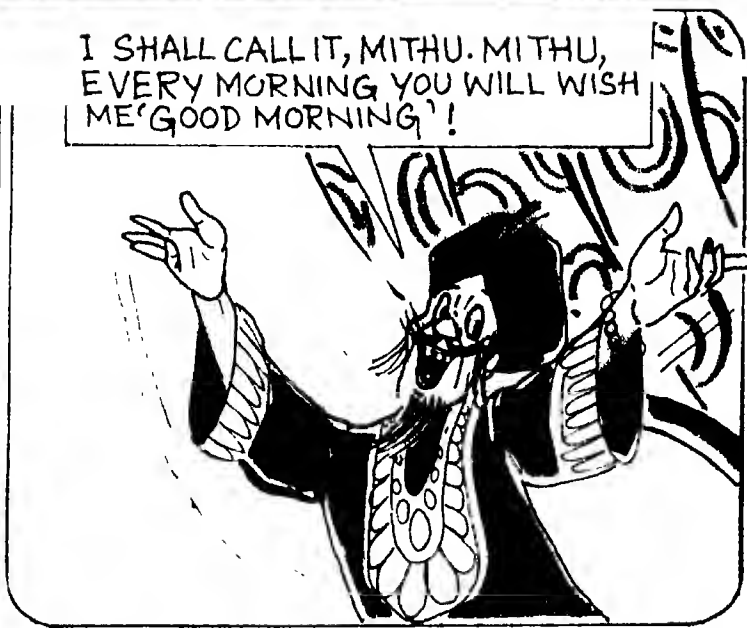
DID YOU HEAR
THAT PARROT?

COME! HEAR THE AMAZING
PARROT! 50 PAISE FOR
ONE TICKET...

A TALKING
PARROT ???
I MUST HAVE IT,
AT ANY COST.

BRING THE PARROT AND
ITS MASTER TO ME.

YES, YOUR
MAJESTY.





Story: Priya Vasudevan

Illustrations:

Nilabho Dhar Chowhury

ONCE UPON A LIFETIME

THE WALLS in our flat were so thin, I could hear every creak of the bed, every whisper that my parents made in the next room. That was the only reason I had agreed to sleep on my own in the next room. It was almost like sleeping in the same room. Still, the dark was too real and there was too much of it between the rooms. I played a game with myself—I'd wait out the fear, widening my eyes until they got tired and then closed in sleep. I was playing this game when I heard *Amma* say, "So alone! It's not good for him. Maintaining the house and the clinic at his age! Sometimes he refuses to answer the door like a recluse. I know, the servant told me." I heard my father grunt. *Amma* went on, "If you...everyone says... why don't we ask him to live with us?" Two grunts. Then my eyes closed and I didn't hear anymore.

I don't know whether they discussed it any further but Grandfather did come to stay with us.



Grandfather was *Amma's* father. After my grandmother passed on, a good ten years ago, he had looked after himself absolutely refusing any help from my mother, his only child. Grandfather was a doctor. Until he came to live with us, I had never seen Grandfather without his black bag, stethoscope in his pocket, smelling of medical spirit and soap. Grandfathers, to my knowledge, were toothless old men, who sat in the sun. But this grandfather, who rarely sat at all and who had all his teeth, didn't seem much like a grandfather. I always called him Doctor *Thatha*.

My first inkling of Grandfather's coming was when *Amma* asked me to clear some shelves in my cupboard for him. "He's your father. Why not your cupboard?" I asked her.

Amma just said, "Don't argue!"

Then Grandfather came. No black bag. He looked tired—and old.

On his first afternoon with us, Grandfather gingerly tested the old divan, the only easy chair being occupied by *Appa*. *Amma* liked low seating—divans, *modas*, etc. so there were hardly any

comfortable chairs in our house. "Hey girl, come here. Show me what you're reading," he said.

I was reading a book on Netaji.

"I met Netaji once; it was long ago..."

I wanted to get on with my book so I waited, politely, then bent my head and began to read.

He sighed, "Never mind, you read your book."

Grandfather tried again, a few days later. This time we were in the garden. I was reading a story-book and Grandfather, was just standing, hands behind his back. "What book are you reading? You know, my elder brother used to send me a list of books, and woe betide me if I didn't read them!" he said.

I listened, my mind far away on some English moor. Grandfather sighed and watched the clouds. When I looked up again, he had his back to me and I got a shock—his back was bent like an old man's.

Padma lived in the next flat. Like me, Padma had no one else to play with. She wasn't an only child but her sister was ten years older to her and her brother already married! I

loved Padma's father. Now, *he* looked like a grandfather—bent and shuffling, with always a kind word for me. He and Grandfather got along pretty well and soon Grandfather turned our front room into a clinic. He began to look more like himself.

I once had a kitten which established itself in our garden. It was always hiding behind the garage-door and scuttling away from human contact. Padma was like that. All eyes and skin and bone. I don't remember what we played, but it couldn't have been very exciting, for Padma always did what I asked and followed me around without an original thought in her head.

Summer in Secunderabad is parched and dry, always enough to make me cross and contrary. Padma and I were watching the monkeys. Padma was eating a sweet; so I dragged her inside. She had offered me some but I refused. Some devil in me prompted me to say, "Don't eat that; it has blood on it."

"No, that's *kesari*," said Padma, her desire to eat the sweet making her bold.

"Someone's eating blood! Bloody, bloody, dirty *chittangal*, *chittangal*!" I hopped around her in a rain dance.

I'd never seen Padma so angry! She grabbed me and pushed me with all her might.

"Something bad will happen to you. You pushed me, no?" I shouted.

"I don't care!" she screamed and ran home crying.

I went about the rest of the day with a frown that would frighten the devil.

Padma didn't speak to me for a long time after that. As is usual, when one knows one is in the wrong, I felt guilty. I didn't say a thing about it to anyone, especially not to *Anma*, who would have told me to apologize at once...that poor girl...you deserved it.

Everyone had got used to my moods. Latha's 'glumps' they all called it as they steered well clear of me. Only Doctor *Thatha* came to me from time to time—wherever I was, my head in a book invariably; he never said anything, but I could feel sympathy coming off him in waves.

A week later, Doctor *Thatha* sneaked up on me



as I was reading, *The Mystery of the 99 Steps* in blood-curdling ecstasy. "I once refused to speak to my brother for a whole week," he said.

I shut my book with a sigh. Doctor *Thatha* had done it again! Just when I'd got to the most exciting part about the mysterious stranger, he had come in with his memories. Who wanted them? But I couldn't hurt the old man, so I said, "Then what happened?"

"He died!" he said.

"What? You're joking, *Thatha*."

"Not of a broken heart, but of jaundice," Grandfather's voice was matter of fact, but his eyes were far away. I knew he was back there, in the past, with his brother.

"Grandfather, tell me a story," I had to say as my interest snagged and held.

Doctor *Thatha* told me the story of an old quarrel between the brothers, pointless now, but oh! so important then; his bitter pain and guilt over his brother's death still fresh. I felt something wet land on my hand. My quarrel with Padma faded to nothing. By evening it was as if nothing had ever happened between us.

Somehow after that day, Doctor *Thatha* didn't need to find me. I would find him and plague him with demands for stories. Doctor *Thatha* really knew how to tell a story. I wish I were as good.

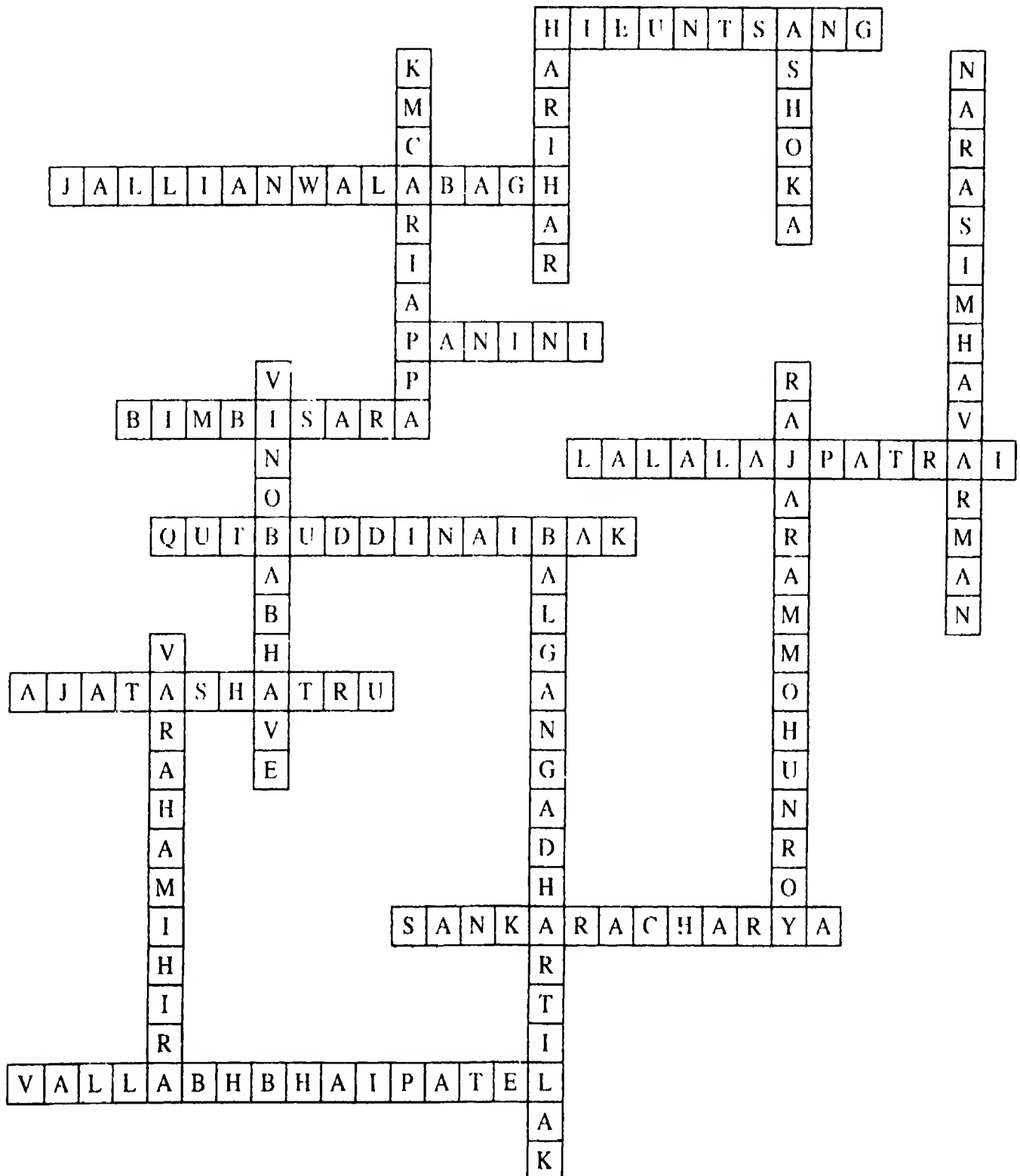
Doctor *Thatha* is no longer with us now,

but his stories are another matter. The other day my publisher sent me the proof of my new book, *Grandfather... Tell Me a Story*. My daughter can't hear Grandfather tell his stories, but she can read them for herself.



Answers to Crossroads 2

'Historically Yours'



A FEW THINGS Ina would always remember about her *Dadi*. First she was, like all *Dadis* in creation, a fabulous cook, specially when it came to making *kababs* and *matar ki kachori* and *kheer*. *Dadi* loved books. She simply loved to cuddle Ina and tell her stories that made sense and had a deeply satisfying end. She loved her plants. My! She could breathe fire if anybody plucked a flower from her garden or so much as touched a leaf of her beloved *monstera*. But there was one side to Ina's *Dadi* that people simply did not know. Every afternoon at about 2.30, *Dadi* quietly slipped out of the house and disappeared for two whole hours.

Now, that, you'll grant me, was most un-*dadi*like behaviour. Why, at 2.30 in the afternoon all *Dadis* in creation were catching up on their beauty sleep. Or at least snoozing over a book. Or sitting in the sun, chatting with the *Dadi / Nani* next door. Or attending to the pickles out in the courtyard. Or discussing the nearest wedding, past or future.

Story: Pratibha Nath

Illustrations: Beejee



Or sitting all dewy eyed and sentimental over a letter from an old, old friend. Or giving *Dada* his medicine. Or simply fussing over him. Yes, all this and more, *Dadis* are known to indulge in. But the disappearing act? Not on your life! The strangest part of it was, *Dada* never objected. But then *Dada* rarely objected to anything anybody did, unless it upset his daily routine. If ever that happened, the entire neighbourhood came to know about it. But that's another story...

Ina's *Dadi* came back at around 4.30, looking tired but fulfilled. She promptly went to bed for half an hour. At 5 she made tea for the family. Yes, *Dadi* loved her cup(s) of tea and apparently nobody quite made it like she did. Once the evening cup of tea was drunk, *Dadi* was her predictable self again—working in the kitchen or helping Ina with her lessons or interminably knitting one of those sweaters. When Ina had gone to sleep, stuffed with stories, *Dadi* read till late into the night. Books on self improvement—oops!—religion, environment, the lot.

That was Ina's *Dadi*. But *where* did she go from

2.30 to 4.30 every day, Monday through Sunday, except when the heavens themselves opened up in a downpour? And then she was restless as a caged bird. Up and down the verandah she went, up and down, looking at her watch every two minutes. As soon as the rain let up a bit, she was out of the gate, all huddled under an umbrella. Her steps were firm and she always turned right. But *where* did she go thereafter?

Once Ina tried to ask her *Dadi* straight. "Tell me, *Dadi*," she said, "what is it that takes you away every single afternoon?" *Dadi* pretended not to hear.

When Ina asked again, *Dadi* simply smiled and placed a finger on her lips. "My secret," she said. At that point Ina must have looked let down for her *Dadi* was quick to add, "Ina dear, some day you'll know. I have a very good reason for going out every day..." And Ina knew that, for the time being at least, the subject was closed.

Several months went by. And then the totally unexpected happened. Ina had gone to a friend's place after school, to study a topic in Bio that defied the whole class. Ina and her friend had a whopping

afternoon together, to the extent of giggling through the said topic in Bio. At around 4.30 Ina's friend announced that the driver was available and would Ina like to be dropped home? Sailing through the streets with a half smile on her lips as she remembered the jokes she had shared with her friend, Ina suddenly hit the earth.

They were passing through a slum. Shacks lined the street. The walls were of mud and the roofs either of bits of tin or plastic sheets or thatch that was wholly inadequate. The driver swerved to avoid a deep pothole full of slush. Ina was thrown off balance and as she looked up, there by the roadside, surrounded by a small crowd of ragged children, stood her *Dadi*...!

"Stop, stop!" screamed Ina, and the car screeched to a halt. Ina wasn't quite sure if her *Dadi* was glad to see her. But one thing was certain: the cluster of children around *Dadi* was sorry to see her go. "*Bai Ji, kal phir ana,*" they screamed. "*Phir gana gayenge.*"

"*Kal main kavita sunaungi,*" said a little girl.



"Bye bye," said a little boy and the entire group exploded in a chorus of 'byes', clapping and dancing as *Dadi* got into the car and sped away.

There were a few moments of complete silence and then *Dadi* drew a deep breath. "Ina," she said and there was a half smile on her face, "Ina dear, so that's where I go every afternoon. Perhaps you'd like to know why?"

"Yes, *Dadi*," said Ina in a whisper.

"Suppose you wait till the evening, when your work is done and the household is asleep. And meanwhile, don't you go

telling people about it!"

By way of a reply, Ina squeezed her *Dadi's* hand. They had already turned in at the gate of their apartment block.

★

Night fell. Dinner was over. *Dada* had turned in, switching off his bedside lamp and the traffic noises had dropped to a hum when *Dadi* came to Ina's room, closing the door behind her. Minutes later, snug in bed beside Ina, she began her story. And her voice seemed to come from far, far away. "Ina dear, we live in a very safe and secure world, you and I. We have more than

enough for all our needs. We enjoy, besides, the love and concern of family and friends. And we have leisure. Things come to us without our having to work for them. But not everybody is so lucky. Those children you saw today... They don't have much going for them. Perhaps we can bring a little light into their lives by giving them a little time."

"Sure, *Dadi*," said Ina quietly. "I figured you were teaching them something. What is it you teach them, *Dadi*?"

"The very basics of hygiene," came the reply.

"In spite of the fact that they don't have access to running water, I try to get them to form a group so we can clean up the place. We sing as we do it. That's where they pick up their *kavitas*. Oh, they are bright and loving, like kids anywhere. We are four women working together. We meet at the bus stop just before the colony. Of course, I take a rickshaw both ways. No more bus rides for me. I guess I'm too old."

Ina gave her *Dadi* a hug. "You'll never be too old," she said with feeling. "But tell me, *Dadi*, why is it you keep all this such a closely-guarded secret?"

"Because I wouldn't have anybody come to know of any good that I may do. But there's more to it, Ina. I... I owe these children a long-standing debt. I must make it up to them for something I did around forty, no, fifty years ago..."

Ina sat up, her face suddenly drained of colour. "*Dadi*," she said and her voice was troubled, "what on earth could you possibly have done? You, of all people?"

But *Dadi* shook her head. "I didn't know what I was doing but I did it all right. On several occa-

sions, in fact. Through two whole years. Till my father was transferred to another city and I finally lost touch with my friend, Katori."

"Katori?" Ina grinned in spite of herself. "Did you really know a girl called Katori?"

"I did. And a sweet girl she was, too. Pretty, with sparkling eyes and thick black hair which her mother did up in more plaits than Katori could count."

"What happened?"

"We used to live in a sprawling bungalow with a huge garden. I was a very lonely child. Of course, my parents were around but they were hardly any company for a nine-year-old. My brother, five years my senior, lived and dreamt hockey. Obviously he had nothing much to do with me. School accounted for part of my day and for the rest, I wandered around the garden. As I said, it was a huge garden and much of it was overgrown. And this portion I found fascinating, for it had many fruit trees. They were old and gnarled and never yielded much fruit but it was great fun loitering around in their shade. My particular favourite was a *ber* tree that bore perhaps

a dozen *bers* in a whole season but they were the sweetest ever."

Dadi paused, thought a bit and went on, "Imagine my surprise when one day I went looking for *bers* and found a girl, about my age, sitting in the fork of the tree. She had just dug her teeth into a plump, yellow *ber* and at the sight of me, she came down the tree in a flying leap. I noticed she wore a short *lehnga* and a little *choli* with an *odhni*.

"I liked the look of her. 'Who are you?' I asked.

"*Katori*," came the reply. And suddenly as she remembered her manners, 'Ram Ram.'

"Where did you come from?" I persisted, for that was the first time I had seen her.

"My father has come to work in this *kothi*," she said and made as if to run away, but I stopped her.

"Something within me eagerly reached out to her and before we knew the afternoon was gone and Bhagwati, the maid, was calling out for me. 'You must come tomorrow,' I told Katori. 'Promise.' She didn't know what a promise was but she said she would come and I raced back to the house, thrilled to bits at having found a



friend.”

Dadi sighed. “My mother was waiting for me. ‘Where were you?’ she asked curiously.

“‘Oh mummy,’ I burst out, ‘I met a girl out there. Under the *ber* tree. Her name is Katori and she is the sweetest thing you ever saw.’

“A girl? Under the *ber* tree?” My mother puckered her brows in surprise. ‘Who is this girl?’ she asked the maid.

“Bhagwati looked away. ‘The daughter of the new *jamadar*,’ she said. ‘They’ve come to live in the outhouse at the far end of the garden.’

“My mother said noth-

ing but I could sense that there was a sudden reserve between us. And I wasn’t wrong, for the same evening my mother came to my room looking the way all mothers do when they have something important to say. She sat down on my bed and put an arm around me. ‘Kuki,’ she said, ‘don’t take this to heart but I’m afraid you can’t play with this girl.’

“‘But why?’ I fairly screamed in distress.

“‘Because she is the daughter of a *jamadar*.’

“‘So? What’s wrong with being the daughter of a *jamadar*? Oh mummy, don’t stop me, please.’

“There was pain in my mother’s voice. ‘What will people say, Kuki? They’ll soon come to know the truth and nobody will forgive either you or me because nobody mixes with *jamadars*. The work they do is dirty.’

“I remember to have burst into tears and my mother sat beside me, one hand placed awkwardly on my back. She was a good woman but not strong enough to stand up against prejudice. ‘Don’t cry, Kuki,’ she said. ‘Suppose... Just suppose you promise never to *touch* this friend of yours...?How

would that be? Then maybe you *can* play with her.’

“But we’re going to play *chor chor* tomorrow. I must touch her and she must touch me. How else do we catch one another?”

“‘I have an answer to that,’ said my mother. ‘Why don’t you keep a little stick for the purpose? Don’t touch her with your hand. Use a stick.’

“Young that I was, I never realised the enormity of what I was doing. For me the only thing that mattered was permission to play with Katori. I remember Katori helped me look for a suitable stick and I painted it red to make it prettier. As long as Katori remained with us, she and I never touched one another with our hands. It was always the stick, a symbol of the heartless, inhuman world that wouldn’t let a little girl be anything but an untouchable...”

Deathly silence fell on the room. At long last Dadi spoke again and there was anguish in her voice, “For years now I have mingled with children from the slums as one of them. I love to do it. But it is also because I must atone for what I did to Katori.”



Story: Cheryl Rao

Illustrations: Subir Roy

UNTIL I started writing this, I always thought that I'd had a sheltered and peaceful childhood. We were not exposed to TV violence, crime on the streets, communal riots and so much else that my eight-year-old son takes in his stride today. Looking back now, I realise that we had our share of excitement—and a fund of real life encounters that only need a little embellishment to make a full scale adventure!

My father was in the Forest Service and then in the Police, and we travelled all over Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka and Hyderabad. We lived in rambling, old district houses and my earliest memories are of huge rooms, dark corners and gardens in which I could get lost. I didn't start school at the age of three, as children do now. Instead, my mother taught her three children at home and we had plenty of time to ourselves, weaving a

fantasy world in our minds.

I was not an adventurous child and at the first sign of the unexpected, I ran to the shelter of my mother's skirts. Often I was too slow to reach there on my own and my elder sister and brother helped drag me out of harm's way—like when we were chased by a snake across the length of our compound. It is likely that we saw the snake and turned and ran. It may not have chased us at

all...but it certainly felt that way at the time! And for over 30 years, I've been reminded by my siblings that I'm here because they saved my young life when I was too plump to run.

When I was about four or five, my father was assigned the task of tracking down a notorious dacoit. My parents did not speak of this top secret job in our presence, but somehow, the mystery and excitement filtered down to us. Daddy plunged whole-heartedly into the search. He grew a beard, wore dark glasses to mask his tell-tale light eyes, adopted the dhoti and shirt of the village people and tracked the wanted man and his gang on foot. He marched through miles of hilly country, where centuries before, Shivaji and his men harassed Mughal hordes.

Once during those long months, we had a mysterious visitor. As she looked up from her sewing, my mother was confronted by an untidy, bearded stranger. She recalled my father's warning that the dacoit might try to get at our family to prevent him from continuing his chase—and my mother opened her mouth to



scream for help. Then the intruder removed his dark glasses and she found herself staring into familiar green eyes!

A short while later, the dacoit surrendered and Daddy allowed us to visit his camp site. My elder sister and I entered Daddy's office and found him busy with a pile of files, so we stayed in one corner of the room. Someone else was also standing

there and at once we felt something in common with him. Like us, he was trying to look as inconspicuous as possible in the stern presence of my uniformed father. He smiled at us and we smiled back. He asked our names and innocently we opened up to him. My father looked up and saw us, but said nothing. After a while, Daddy said, "Come on, my girls," and

stood up. Obediently, we followed him out of the room, smiling goodbye to our new-found friend.

When we were out of the 'office', we asked Daddy when we could see the dacoit he had nabbed. He stopped and turned around. Four constables were leading out the gentle, unassuming man we had been talking to a few moments earlier. He did not look at us as he got into the Prisoners' Van and the doors clanged shut behind him, but my sister and I felt distinctly uncomfortable. We had imagined a man six foot tall, with huge moustaches, bloodshot eyes and a voice like thunder—a man in the mould of Gabbar Singh perhaps, long before Gabbar Singh was thought of! Instead, this ordinary looking man was the ruthless killer my father had been in pursuit of for months.

The high point of our young lives suddenly felt flat. We could not understand then that a face is not the mirror of one's deeds. So much can be hidden under a pleasing exterior. Time taught us that later.

Those early years as wanderers in small towns, must have been difficult

for my mother. In 1960 Daddy was posted to his hometown—Poona (now Pune). At last we had come to civilization! We were safe from dacoits now. Safe from the wild animals of the forests. With the moderate climate of Poona, we even had Mother Nature on our side!

My sister and I started school. How we loved that spacious building near the Boat Club! Our home was not far away, just across the river and beyond an empty field. It was named Bijou Lodge (Bijou is French for jewel) and once my mother set to work on it, it did sparkle like a gem in the green countryside.

Then in July 1961, Mother Nature decided that we had had it too easy. It rained incessantly for three or four days until one of the dams supplying water to the city, burst. We were in school when it happened. From there, we could see the water level of the river rising alarmingly. Suddenly, we were packed into buses and sent homeward. We crossed the Yeravada bridge, looking fearfully out of the windows at the muddy water whirling just ten feet below us. We

saw furniture being swept away by the current and were scared that the bridge would collapse while we were still on it. The bus took a round-about route and left us on high ground some distance away from the usual halting place. We were too young to know the way home, but my sister was not about to reveal her ignorance of our whereabouts. Bravely, she caught hold of my hand and pulled me along behind the stream of children. We crossed a few fields—and then caught sight of our house. We raced across those last few metres and found comfort within the walls of Bijou Lodge.

But we were not yet safe. Our house was less than half a kilometre from the river. From our kitchen door, we watched the river overflow its banks, rush across the road and leap into the open *maidan* next to our compound. The *maidan* was a kind of trough and it turned into a lake within minutes, but the fury of the flood had exhausted itself in filling that space, and the water moved less rapidly into our garden.

My mother had packed

a few trunks and loaded them into the car which stood outside the front door. The driveway to the gate was at a higher level and would remain clear of water for some time.

Mummy was determined not to leave the house until the water entered it. My father was out of town on tour and my brother had not yet returned from his school in the city. She hoped that he would have had the presence of mind to go to our grandmother's house there, instead of trying to reach home. The phone was not working and in any case, my grandmother had no phone at her place.

All three of us kept a vigil at the kitchen door. The water reached the top step. Another few inches and it would be inside the house. My mother had always been afraid of water, but as we stood there and watched the flood waters creep towards our feet, she tried her best to keep us from being afraid. She told us which of our party dresses she had packed into the trunks that fit in the car—and we laughed at the thought of having only our Sunday best to wear if we were forced to leave everything else behind!



It must have been late afternoon when suddenly we noticed a water mark on the top step. "It's going down! The water's going down!" we screamed in delight, jumping up and down and dragging Mummy to check for herself. Yes, the water was receding. It had crept around the house on three sides, leaving only the driveway clear, and now it was slowly falling back, inch by inch. What a relief!

We were among the lucky ones that day. Others were not so fortunate. Many people lost precious property. Banks and other institutions had their records swept off. The granaries near the river were flooded and the smell of rotting grain filled the air for miles around. Road and railway bridges were damaged or washed away. The Yeravada bridge near our home had held out—and

still does. There was no electricity and running water for days and the normal routine came to a standstill. Mother Nature had her way of reminding us that we were still at her mercy!

Now that I have an imaginative eight-year-old son of my own, I try to recreate for him the atmosphere of the many quiet places and old houses I visited and lived in when I was young. My husband is in the Army and most often we are in small, way-out cantonments, where letting our imaginations run wild is the best recreation for the long summer afternoons of the desert or the cold winter evenings of the North. My son's flights of fancy are much more daring than mine and together, we try and create fiction for ourselves and for others—those young in years and young at heart.



NOVEMBER 1996 YOUR PAGES Special Issue

It is that time of the year again when
exams are but a bad dream
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at least for a while
summer holidays loom large...

Children's World invites entries for its
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So if you are below 18 years of age, send in stories,
anecdotes, memoirs, jokes, poems, riddles, quizzes,
anything and everything that will make the
November 1996 **Your Pages** a special issue.

Address all entries to

Editor

**Children's World
Nehru House**

**4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg
New Delhi 110002**

Last date: July 31, 1996

***All entries must have the contributor's full name,
age, class and the name of the school.***

Smallest, largest, tallest...

Water Water Everywhere



Oceans cover more than 70 per cent of the surface of the earth and contain 97 per cent of the earth's water. How is that for size? Oceans are deep, dark places that hold great secrets and mysteries in their depths, shores and beds. In addition to providing us with food, minerals, oil and channels of transport, oceans have veritable mountain ranges stretching for thousands of miles on their floors! Here are some interesting facts about oceans for your file:

* The **largest** ocean in the world is the **Pacific Ocean**. It covers about 181,000,000 square km, which is 1/3 of the earth's surface. Its size can be gauged from the fact that it can hold all the continents in it.

* The Pacific Ocean is also the **deepest** ocean, with an average depth of 3940 m.

* The Arctic Ocean is the **smallest** ocean in the world. It covers about 9,500,000 square km. As it lies around the North Pole, ice covers most of its

waters throughout the year.

* The deepest parts of the oceans are called Trenches, which are long narrow valleys on the ocean bed. The deepest spot in the oceans is the Mariana Trench, which is 11,033 m below sea level and lies in the Pacific Ocean, near the island of Guam. Were you to place the Mt. Everest in that spot, more than 2 km of water would cover the peak!

* The ocean floor consists of deep valleys,

mountains and plains, much like the land. There is a huge mountain chain 60,000 km long, that runs through and under the three major oceans!

* All forms of life originated in the ocean. Study of the fossils of a type of sea worm shows that the cell structure of this organism has remained unchanged for over 500 million years.

* The Antarctic ice cap is a thick layer of ice and snow formed over millions of years, that covers most of the continent. It is the largest body of fresh water/ice in the world, with a volume of 30 million cubic km and

represents 70 per cent of the fresh water in the world. If the Antarctic ice cap were to melt, oceans would rise in level and flood coastal cities round the world.

* Oceans also provide about 25 per cent of the world's oil (crude). According to scientists, about 3 trillion barrels of oil lie unexplored under the ocean beds.

* Oceans also house the smallest and the largest living things—from the tiniest one-celled organisms called phytoplankton, to the blue whale which is the largest animal that has ever lived.

* About 13,300 types of

fish live in the oceans.

* Do you know who owns the oceans? A Law of the Sea Treaty was drafted by the UN in 1982, by which 12 nautical miles or 22 kms of sea from a country's shoreline is governed by that country. This is called the Territorial Sea of that country. The High Seas, which lies beyond this point, cannot be governed by any country.

* The word 'ocean' is derived from the Greek word 'Oceanus'. In Greek mythology, this was believed to be the river that encircled the world.

**Compiled by
Thangamani**

Illustrations: Nilabho



Story: Homagni Chaudhuri
Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

MR. DE looked at his watch, abandoned the cryptic crossword, moved to the chair by the side of the window and eagerly watched the road. Bimala, the elderly housekeeper, entered the room and said, "I'll get the tea ready. Today, it's stuffed *parathas* and fried *brinjals*."

Mr. De would have only a small portion but he looked forward to having tea with his granddaughter, Pompi, who needed large helpings after a busy day at school. He nodded his approval.

Bimala looked at the clock and said, "It's past four. I must rush. Pompi will be in any moment." Pompi did not use the school transport. She returned by mini bus which was much quicker. She knew that except for Bimala, her grandfather was alone in the house from nine in the morning when her parents went out for the day.

After a very active career, Mr. De, an engi-



neer, had retired a few years earlier. He had happily settled down in his house in Jodhpur Park and enjoyed his hobbies of gardening and reading. His son's family lived with him. Both his son and daughter-in-law taught Economics at the University and, because of their research work, returned late in the evenings. Pompei relied on her grandfather for help with her studies, not that she needed much assistance. He was also her companion in many of her other activities.

Now that winter was approaching, Mr. De and Pompei played badminton in the evenings. But on some days, there was little time for games or chit chat. Ms. Ganguly, the temporary maths teacher for class seven, did no explaining and even got sums wrong on the board. Pompei, who liked to score full marks in her favourite subject, enlisted the help of her *Dadu* and put in lots of extra effort. But even then, Ms. Ganguly deducted marks for what she called poor presentation, infuriating Pompei who preferred *Dadu's* methods.

Mr. De soon spotted Pompei on the road, but

instead of her usual hop-skip walk, she was approaching with heavy steps and had her head lowered. She was certainly not her normal, chirpy self. As Mr. De opened the door, he asked, "Anything wrong?"

"Yes, *Dadu*," was the answer. "The Principal has suspended me and my friends. We are not to go near the school for the next two days."

"Why?" asked Mr. De. "What have you done now?" Mr. De knew that while Pompei was really a very nice girl, she could be very mischievous. When Pompei frowned in concentration, he said, "First wash up. You can tell me the details over tea."

After tucking in and feeling a little better, Pompei said, "Ms Ganguly," and paused. Mr. De nodded in sympathy. He had wanted to meet the Principal to complain about the maths teaching but had restrained himself.

"She was a little late," continued Pompei. "When she came in, she couldn't write anything on the blackboard. A banana had been rubbed over it. But Ms Ganguly is a spoilsport. She ran out and called the Principal."

"Who has done this?"

the Principal asked angrily. Not receiving any reply, she thundered, 'Hooligans, cowards. All of you will be punished.' She then asked Ms Ganguly, 'Who, do you think is responsible?'

"And that sneak said, 'Pompi's gang. They are all very rude.'

"Our fault is that on the previous day, we found a mistake in the sum on the board. The Principal, of course, believed her and suspended the five of us for two days. She has given us letters."

"But we've not done anything. Malini and Ranjana are the guilty ones. I don't know why I didn't speak up."

Mr. De laughed. "At least, you have not been caned. Remember the story *Dadan* told you about punishment in our school?"

Pompi did remember. It was a Sunday when everyone was at home that Pompei had heard the story. She was on the terrace, helping her *Dadu* prepare pots for winter seedlings, when she saw Professor Dutta on the road below. "*Dadu*," she said, "*Dadan* is coming and he is carrying some packets."

Mr. De smiled and

together with Pompe came down to receive the visitor. Professor Dutta, a retired teacher of Physics, and Mr. De were classmates in school and, now staying in the same locality, visited each other frequently. As Professor Dutta came near, Pompe ran out, and asked, "*Dadan*, what are you carrying?"

"A birthday cake for your *Dadu*," he answered. "It's chocolate and large enough for all of us. Also a book—on the chaos theory. That's mathematics or more precisely probability. It's all about how something small may trigger a major event, like your sneezing here may cause a storm hundreds of miles away."

Pompe enjoyed listening to mathematical discussions but she ignored the second statement. It was a shame, the family had forgotten *Dadu's* birthday. She went inside with the cake and told her mother.

"Bad, very bad, inexcusable," said Mother. "I had marked the date on the calendar but I was so busy in the morning, I didn't even glance at the calendar. I'll set out a good tea now."

Pompe came back and asked, "*Dadan*, how do you remember *Dadu's*

birthday every year?"

"It's a habit," replied Professor Dutta. "I brought the first cake, when your *Dadu* and I were in school. I had saved all my pocket money for that. I'll tell you the story."

"We were then in class seven, same age as you are now. Your *Dadu* may have told you that the Principal of the school was a physicist. He was a good, but unconventional teacher. He would take special science classes, out of the syllabus, to widen our minds, that is what he used to say."

"One day, we were in the science laboratory. The lesson, was to be a practical demonstration of an electric calling-bell, a novelty gadget in those days. The lab attendant told us to wait, and then went and stood outside."

"The kit—an electromagnet, a bell push, switch, bits of wire, were all laid out on the table. 'I know all about this,' I said. 'I'll make the connections.' The others tried to stop me but I did not listen."

"I wired up the parts, pushed the plug into the mains socket and pressed the switch. The bell rang but only once. The wires

caught fire and the smell of burning rubber filled the room."

"The Principal came in at that moment. He pulled out the plug, poured half a bucket of sand on the table and put out the fire. Very angry, he shouted, 'Who did that? Confess, or else all of you will be caned.'"

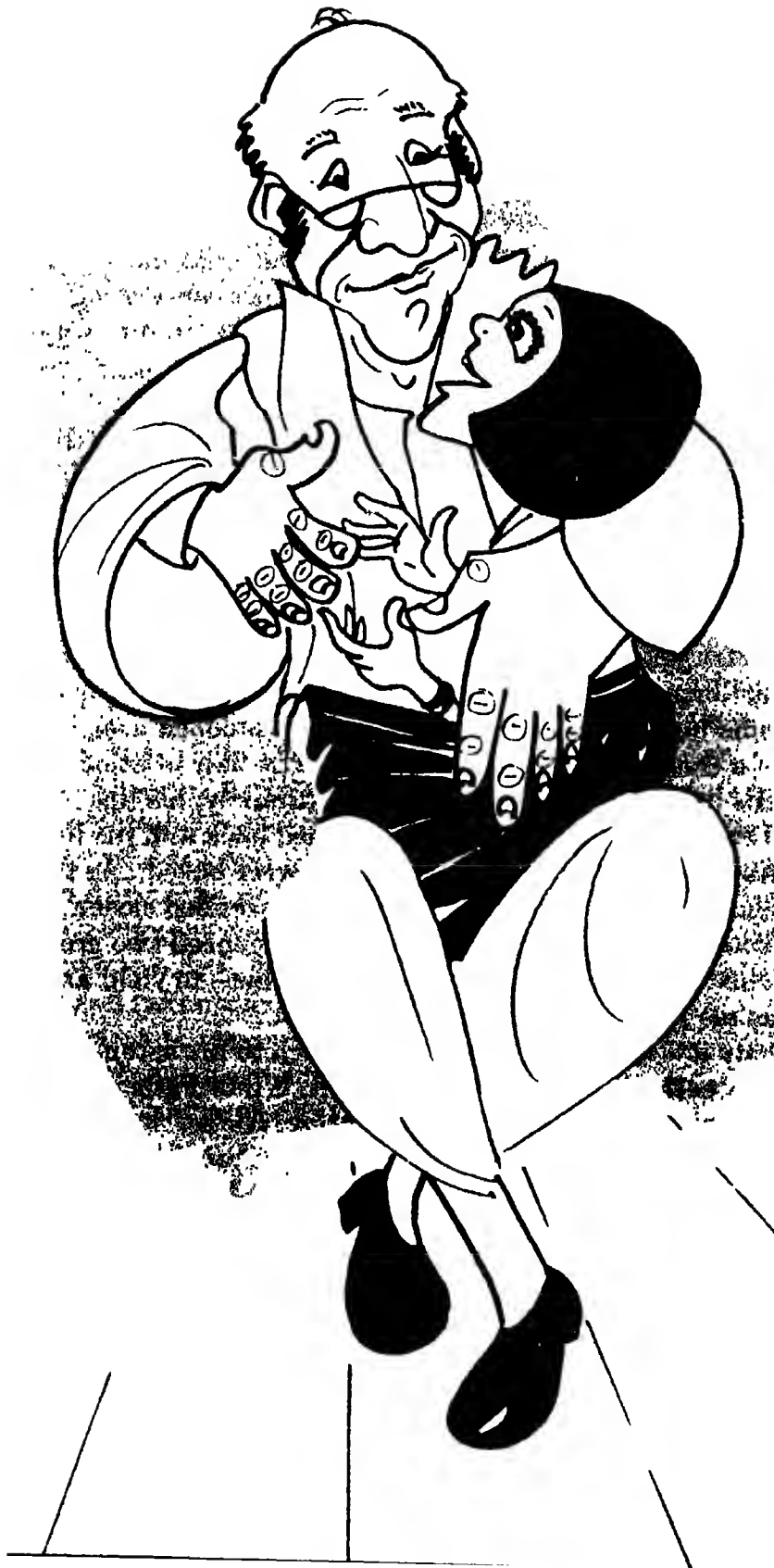
"I was trembling with fear but your *Dadu* raised his hand, Why, I don't know."

Mr. De interrupted. He smiled and said, "Your *Dadan* was a sickly boy then, too many attacks of malaria."

Professor Dutta continued with the story. "The Principal picked up the bamboo pointer that also served as a cane and gave six of the best on your *Dadu's* backside. The Principal recovered his temper and said, 'I hope you've all learnt that electricity is a good servant but a bad master. A little knowledge is dangerous. Luckily there is a separate fuse for this plug, otherwise the entire wiring of the school would have caught fire.'"

"The Principal forgot the incident. Even your *Dadu* forgot it. But I remember."

Three days later,



Pompi, still nervous, went to school. The Principal had warned her that she would be under careful watch. There had been no difficulty regarding the letter. She had held it out to her father and said, "Sign here. *Dadu* knows all about it." And Father had signed without any fuss.

Pompi did not want to meet the Principal. During recess, she did not go to the playground but instead sat in the library with a complicated book on Physics in front. When the Principal's two peons passed by the window, she shivered. As she came out, she saw the Principal at a distance and turned around, but an authoritative call made her come back. "Pompi," said the Principal, "you have missed two whole days. You must catch up."

The days passed. As school was about to close for the short winter vacation, Pompi returned home, very excited. "*Dadu*," she said, "Ms. Ganguly is leaving. There is a tea party for her tomorrow evening."

Beasts and Animals

By Reader of the month: Bhavana Nair

WHITE FANG. Part-dog, part-wolf. Born in the wild. "He was different from his brothers and sisters. Their hair already betrayed the reddish hue inherited from their mother, the she-wolf; while he alone... was the one little gray cub of the litter... He was a fierce little cub. So were his brothers and sisters... But he was... the fiercest of the litter. He could make a louder rasping growl than any of them. His tiny rages were much more terrible than theirs..."

Living in the wild, White Fang learns to hunt and kill, to survive, learning from his mother and from his own experiences. "His was the luck of the beginner...It was by sheer blundering that he chanced upon the shrewdly hidden ptarmigan nest. He fell into it...in the heart of the bush...amongst seven

ptarmigan chicks...at first he was frightened...Then he perceived that they were very little, and he became bolder. They moved. He placed his paw on one, and its movements were accelerated. This was a source of enjoyment to him. He smelled it. He picked it up in his mouth. It struggled and tickled his tongue. At the same time he was made aware of a sensation of hunger. His jaws closed together. There was a crunching of fragile bones, and warm blood ran in his mouth. The taste of it was good. This was meat, the same as his mother gave him, only it was alive between his teeth and therefore better. So he ate the ptarmigan. Nor did he stop till he had devoured the whole brood..."

White Fang's life in the wild would have gone on as any other animal's but for his chance encounter with humans. "The cub

had never seen man, yet the instinct concerning man was his. In dim ways he recognized in man the animal that had fought itself to primacy over the other animals of the Wild. Not alone out of his own eyes, but out of the eyes of all his ancestors was the cub now looking upon man...One of the Indians arose and walked over to him and stooped over him...His hair bristled involuntarily; his lips writhed back and his little fangs were bared...As the hand descended closer... He experienced two great impulsions—to yield and to fight..."

Much to his astonishment, White Fang sees his mother, Kiche, "the fearless one, crouching down till her belly touched the ground, whimpering, wagging her tail, making peace signs..." Kiche, who had run away with the wolves, now returns to her master, Gray Beaver. And

White Fang, still a cub, follows his mother.

Though he gets regular meals and a warm corner to sleep and is even protected by Gray Beaver, the antagonistic attitude of the other dogs and pups in the Indian camp, together with the unloving attitude of his master moulds White Fang's behaviour, burying into near oblivion softer emotions. "There were deeps in his nature which had never been sounded. A kind word, a caressing touch of the hand, on the part of Gray Beaver, might have sounded these deeps; but Gray Beaver did not caress nor speak kind words. It was not his way..."

White Fang "Hated by his kind and by mankind, indomitable, perpetually warred upon and himself waging perpetual war, his development was rapid and one-sided. This was no soil for kindliness and affection to blossom in. Of such things he had not the faintest glimmering. The code he learned was to obey the strong and to oppress the weak..."

It is also at the Indian camp that White Fang comes to detest being laughed at, which is almost his undoing later.

"...He knew laughter and the meaning of it. It is not given us to know how some animals know laughter, and know when they are being laughed at; but it was this same way that White Fang knew it. And he felt shame that the man-animals should be laughing at him..."

Driven to drink, Gray Beaver is forced to sell White Fang to Beauty Smith, the cowardliest of all men. "...Cringing and snivelling himself before the blows or angry speech of a man, he revenged himself, in turn, upon creatures weaker than he..."

In the cruel hands of this coward, White Fang "becomes a fiend. He was kept chained in a pen... and here Beauty Smith teased and irritated and drove him wild with petty torments. The man early discovered White Fang's susceptibility to laughter... This laughter was uproarious and scornful... At such times reason fled from White Fang, and in his transports of rages he was even more mad than Beauty Smith... To such an extent was he tormented, that he hated blindly... He hated the chain that bound him, the men who peered in at him through

the slats of the pen, the dogs that accompanied the men, and that snarled malignantly at him in his helplessness. He hated the very wood of the pen that confined him."

Ferocious beyond all reasoning, White Fang now has to fight all the dogs that Beauty Smith brings to him. The onlookers pay to watch the fight and Beauty Smith rakes in the money thus earned. And it is during one such encounter that White Fang nearly meets his end. And his benefactor, Weedon Scott.

Weedon Scott, witness to White Fang engaged in a fight to death with a bull dog, buys him from Beauty Smith. Now, at another turn in life, White Fang has to unlearn a whole lot of things he has learnt so far and learn a hundred new things including love, an emotion totally alien to him.

"But this love did not come in a day. He began with *like* and out of it slowly developed... As the days went by, the evolution of *like* into *love* was accelerated. White Fang himself began to grow aware of it, though in his consciousness he knew not what love was. It manifested itself to him as a

void in his being—a hungry, aching, yearning void that clamoured to be filled. It was a pain and an unrest...a joy...a wild, keen-thrilling satisfaction...*Like* had been replaced by *love*. And love was the plummet dropped down into the deeps of him where like had never gone. And responsive, out of his deeps had come the new thing—love...”

Jack London creates in *White Fang* a creature to be pitied, driven by his experiences to become what he does, treated harshly by his own kind and man to whom he has subjugated himself. Then out of the depths of this same creature rises another, a transformed *White Fang*, the best in him brought out by a single man's understanding and love.

Jack London's *White Fang* is a powerful novel of the bestiality of man, of the depths to which human behaviour towards animals can sink. The author's grasp of the nature of man and beast, plain to the reader of *White Fang*, though making it horrifying at places, also renders it compelling reading.

Who Really Causes Ozone Depletion?

CEE-NFS

THE CONTROVERSY about what really causes the depletion of the earth's ozone layer has finally been resolved, reports *National Wildlife*.

Studies through a NASA satellite have helped establish that the ozone hole over the Antarctic is caused by man-made chemicals. The satellite measured atmospheric gases and found that these chemicals also cause ozone depletion in other regions around the

globe. According to NASA, over 80% of the chlorine present in the atmosphere is generated by industrial chemicals.

The presence of these chemicals damages life-sustaining ozone. A blanket of ozone gas enveloping the earth protects it from harmful cancer-causing ultraviolet rays which can also kill plants and microscopic organisms.

An international agreement signed in 1987 to control the use of ozone-

depleting gases has been able to reduce atmospheric CFCs. CFCs or chloroflourocarbons, known to be the major reason for thinning ozone, are slowly being phased out by industrial users such as refrigerator and cleaning powder manufacturers.

But according to NASA scientists, the effects that CFCs have had on the ozone layer will prevail at least until 2020 A.D. as these chemicals are rather long lived.

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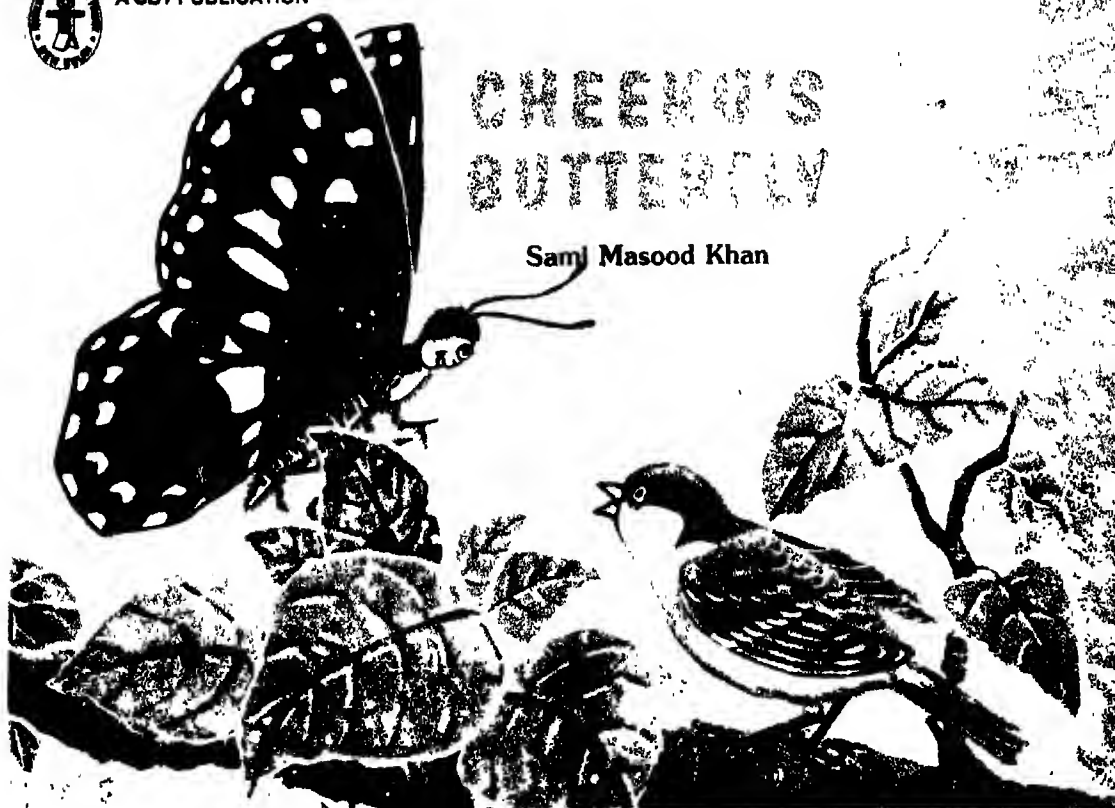


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Dear Editor...

I am an ardent reader of your wonderful magazine *Children's World*. I found the new feature 'Crosswords' very appealing to the intellectual in me and have been participating with enthusiasm in the monthly contest.

I would like to bring to your notice a small error in the **CROSSWORDS-4** contest in the April 1996 issue. The clue for 4 down is missing. I have been able to guess the answer, but many of the other readers may not be able to. I request your attention to this error. Thank you very much for

The exams are over... the new session has begun and holiday homework assignments are being slipped in at the end of every class. The dilemma at home is where *not* to go for the holidays and what short term courses to enrol for. Song, dance, cricket, play-acting, computer, pottery, cookery, and such-like hobby classes are probably uppermost in your mind—and list of priorities. I wonder, do the lists figure 'grandfathers'/grandmothers' house(s) for holidays' any longer? When we were young—and that's not quite hundreds of years ago, as you would like to believe—grandfather's house used to be our favourite place to take off to! Many a tale of my grandfather has been featured in these pages—but how many of you *really* know your own grandfather?

Two recent encounters that *Children's World* had with grandfathers has made them the topic of the month

bringing out such a wonderful magazine. Please bring in more features on current affairs.

B. Vasantha, New Delhi

The clue for 4 Down is A s... of apes (DRSWSSNHEE). Also: 17 Across A s... of foxes (LKKSU). The error is regretted. The last date for the entries for Crossroads 4 has been extended to May 15, 1996.

Editor

Children's World is the best magazine. I'm in the IXth class and will be going to the Xth but my older

for us! The first encounter was with 'Grandfather' Sharma of Jaipur whose children and now grandchildren subscribe to the magazine; he wrote to us saying that "*Children's World* was killed when you turned it into a teenager's MONTHLY". ... "In India we have nothing left for children".

Our reply to him, "... we have not only kept it alive against all odds", "we do not see anything wrong with "teenagers" magazines which we are not—exclusively anyway. After all teenagers are not monsters from another planet but our own children going through the natural process of growing up..." etc. etc. and that ... "India has the richest treasures of all for their children. Caring grandfathers (like you)—who will go to any length to ensure children in India—*do* have something for them..."

We are still awaiting

friends advice me to read *Children's World*.

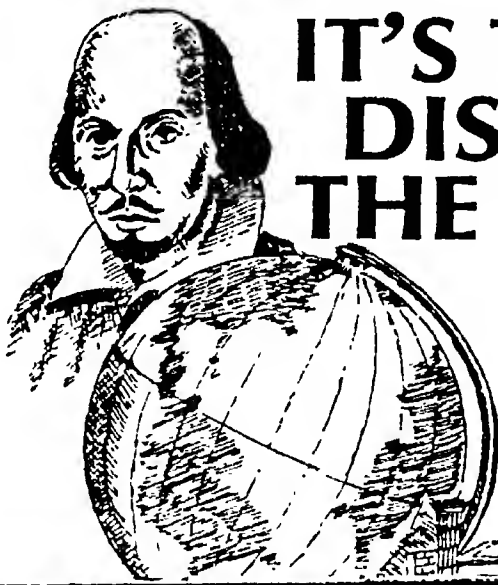
It is a fine way to improve the brain power of children. All students of my class like it and we are regular readers of the magazine.

Our teachers also tell us to read *Children's World* because it is in simple English and I want to improve my English language skills. It is also full of general knowledge. In the February issue 'A Vintage Fire-engine at the Railway Museum' was the best article. I'm really thankful to you.

Sandeep Lohchab, Goa

Mr. Sharma's response, but some of the sting from his words was taken away when Grandfather S.P. Verma of Agra walked into our office. He renewed subscriptions to *Children's World* for two years each, for three of his grandchildren in three different cities of India, as well as his own, in Agra. His copy, he says, is for the neighbourhood community club for children—"One must," he insists, "take care not just of one's own grandchildren but of other children too."

Hats off to the two grandfathers! And to all of you there, looking forward to yawning in boredom during the hot summer holidays—drop everything and rush off to your grandparents. Discover your grandfather/grandmother. They are the richest treasures your parents can ever gift you...



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A LETTER

Dear push ups and push downs,

It happened! It did happen! Raghu became Vice-Principal for an hour. No, the earth did not open up, the skies did not fall, there was no blinding blizzard, no delirious snowstorm, no devastating earthquake, no alien spaceships—nothing that I prayed would happen, happened. Raghu did take over as Vice-Principal for an hour. Well, almost.

Oh, my aching bones! Oh, my sore eyes! Oh, my writing, writhing hand! Oh, me! Oh, dear! Raghu took over! And what a long, dreary time it was!

What an infinitely limitless, century long nearly-an-hour it was! Oh, how weary I feel thinking of it.

Raghu was supposed to be Vice-Principal for the third period and for twenty minutes after that—during recess too. Our third period on Tuesday is Geography so we felt assured that we would all be spared Raghu's Vice-Principalship for that time. You can imagine how many of us suddenly became very fond of islands and deltas. But unfortunately, Mr. Krish (must have been his toothache again and his brain not functioning

normally), said it would be a free period for us so that we could help Raghu with his Vice-Principalship.

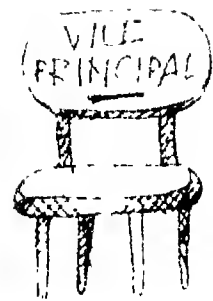
"Raghu will need help," Mr. Krish said. "Maybe he will appoint a few of you to go around the school to make sure everything is running smoothly."

Raghu, the power-lover, appointing others? Never in a billion years! Raghu who would like to be all things to all people all the time, actually dividing his authority? Never. Never. Never.

And never never never was exactly what happened. Raghu took over smoothly, exactly when



TO YOU.



the bell rang. And exactly as the bell rang, a change came over Raghu. His face became stiff and high, he looked down at us, as if we were two feet three inches from the ground and he was six miles down from the sky.

He sniffed, he glared, he tightened his jaw muscles.

And worst of all, he began to bark. He began to bark orders. And most of his ordering was directed at me, at me who was once his best friend. And worst, worst of all, he called me not 'Perky' but 'Pradeep' which is my other name, the one I keep hidden in the laundry basket. Not even

Mr. Krish calls me Pradeep.

"Pradeep," ordered Raghu. "Stand up, go to the blackboard and clean it."

The blackboard was already clean. "But..." I began.

"Pradeep," he barked sternly. "Stand up, go to the blackboard, scribble on it and then clean the scribbling."

"But..." I started to...

"Do it," he ordered fiercely. "Now."

I stood up, went to the blackboard drew a higgledy piggledy square on it and then rubbed it off.

"Pradeep," said the

idiotic voice behind me, "go to the door and make a noise."

"What?" I asked, or rather, began to ask.

"Go," he ordered. "Go to the door and shout, scream."

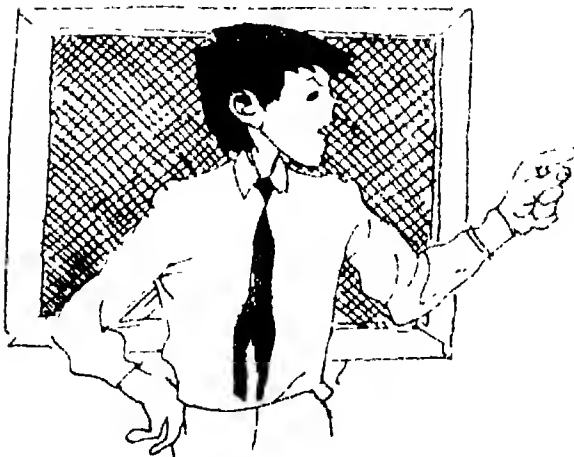
I went to the door of the classroom and whispered "Hey," as if I was a lamb without a bleat.

"Louder," he ordered.

I said "Hey" the way a rabbit would call a fox.

"Louder," he screamed.

So I screamed "Hey, hey, hey" like a blizzard calling a thunderstorm to join in the fun of an earthquake and a volcanic eruption. "Hey," I yelled and the blizzard and the



thunderstorm and the earthquake and the volcano answered. And so did the whole school, and Mr. Krish and the Principal.

And in the middle of a minute, I was whisked off to the Principal's office where my ears burned with all I had to hear from the Principal, from Mr. Krish and from—hold your chairs tightly—from the temporary Vice-Principal who spoke the most and went on and on about how irresponsible I was, how noisy, and how every time I got a chance, I would break a vase, and that my garden was a

graveyard of vases, of what I had broken and splintered in ten years of wickedness. "Since he was two years old," the voice of darkness went on. And on and on.

I think Mr. Krish heard it all and so did the Principal. And in the middle of half a minute, Raghu was transformed into a school-boy again and Mr. Krish took back the Vice-Principalship.

"Maybe you should wait for a few more years before you can be a Vice-Principal," said Mr. Krish.

And the Principal added, "Being in a position of authority does not

mean that you become a monster."

Then he looked at the remains of his vase which he had piled up on his table and his eyes turned red and purple and his hair stood up. But don't suppose that was what he meant by the word 'monster'.

Anyway, I didn't mind anything after that. As soon as we came out of the Principal's office, as soon as the door shut behind us, I... I stuck my tongue out at Raghu and wriggled my hands and made a horrible horrible face.

I did. I did. I became a monster.

*Yours monstrosly
Perky*



**Smallest, largest,
tallest...**



Man has always taken great pride in his building prowess. He has, over the centuries, built forts and palaces, towers and temples and other architectural marvels. Let's read about the magnificent structures that are scattered round the globe, inspiring awe and wonder.

* The tallest free-standing structure in the world is the Canadian National (CN) Tower in Toronto, Canada. The broadcasting tower is 553 m tall and was completed in 1976.

* The tallest building in the world is the Sears Towers in Chicago. The 443 m tall, 110-story building is the tallest of the mail order

business house of Sears and Roebuck.

* In India, the TV tower in Pitampura, New Delhi, is the tallest structure. Built by National Building Construction Corporation, it is 235 m tall.

* One of the first known towers in the ancient world was the Lighthouse of Alexandria, built by Ptolemy II (283-246 BC).

* Practically every house of prayer has a tower or tower-like structure, whether it is the minaret in a mosque or the steeple in a church. Hindu temples, especially in the south, have 'gopurams', tall structures with several storeys. The

temple in Srirangam, Tamil Nadu. It is 72 m tall and has seven storeys.

* 'Minars' are tall towers attached to mosques. The oldest minarets in the world are believed to be those at a mosque in Damascus, built in 707 AD.

* The tallest minaret in India is the Qutb Minar in Delhi, which was started by Qutb-ud-din Aibak in 1193 AD. The 73 m tall minaret was completed by his successors and has three different architectural styles.

* The Eiffel Tower in Paris is a 300 m wrought iron, skeletal tower designed by Alexandre Gustave Eiffel in 1889. For a long time, it was the

tallest structure in the world.

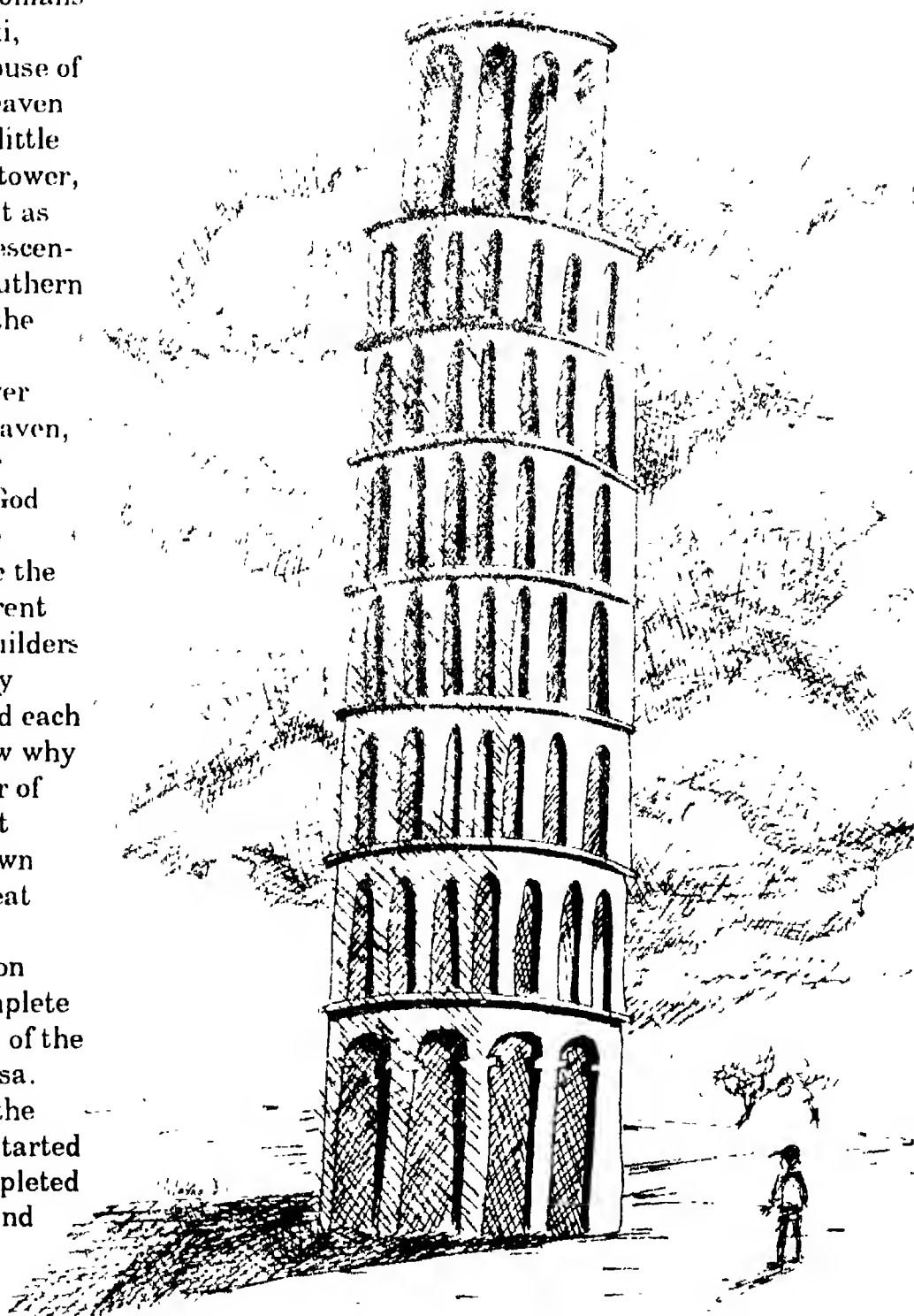
* Ever wondered what the Tower of Babel was? It was a seven-storied structure in the shape of a pyramid, with a shrine on top, built by the ancient Mesopotamians in Babylon. The Babylonians called it Etemeranki, which meant 'the house of the foundation of heaven and earth'. Though little is known about the tower, the Bible mentions it as being built by the descendants of Noah in Southern Mesopotamia after the great flood. Initially intended to be a tower that would reach heaven, the tower was never completed because God did not want it to be completed and made the builders speak different languages. So the builders stopped work as they could not understand each other. Now you know why it is called the Tower of Babel when different people speak their own minds creating a great deal of chaos?

* No information on towers would be complete without the mention of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The construction of the 55 m tall structure started in 1173, but got completed only between 1360 and

1370. Built on unstable ground, the seven-storey edifice began sinking even as the third storey was being built. It leans 4.4 m out of line when measured from the seventh storey and continues to lean 1.3 mm every year.

So much for towers. There are other architectural marvels too. Here are some:

* The Great Wall of China is the only man-made structure that can be seen from space and is the longest structure ever



built. It is nearly 6400 km long and was built entirely by hand. It was begun in the fourth century BC and continued to be built by various emperors till 1600 AD. Watch-towers are located every 90 to 180 m of the Wall. It has an average height of about 7.5 m. Sections of the Wall have collapsed over the centuries, but large sections remain intact and attract a lot of

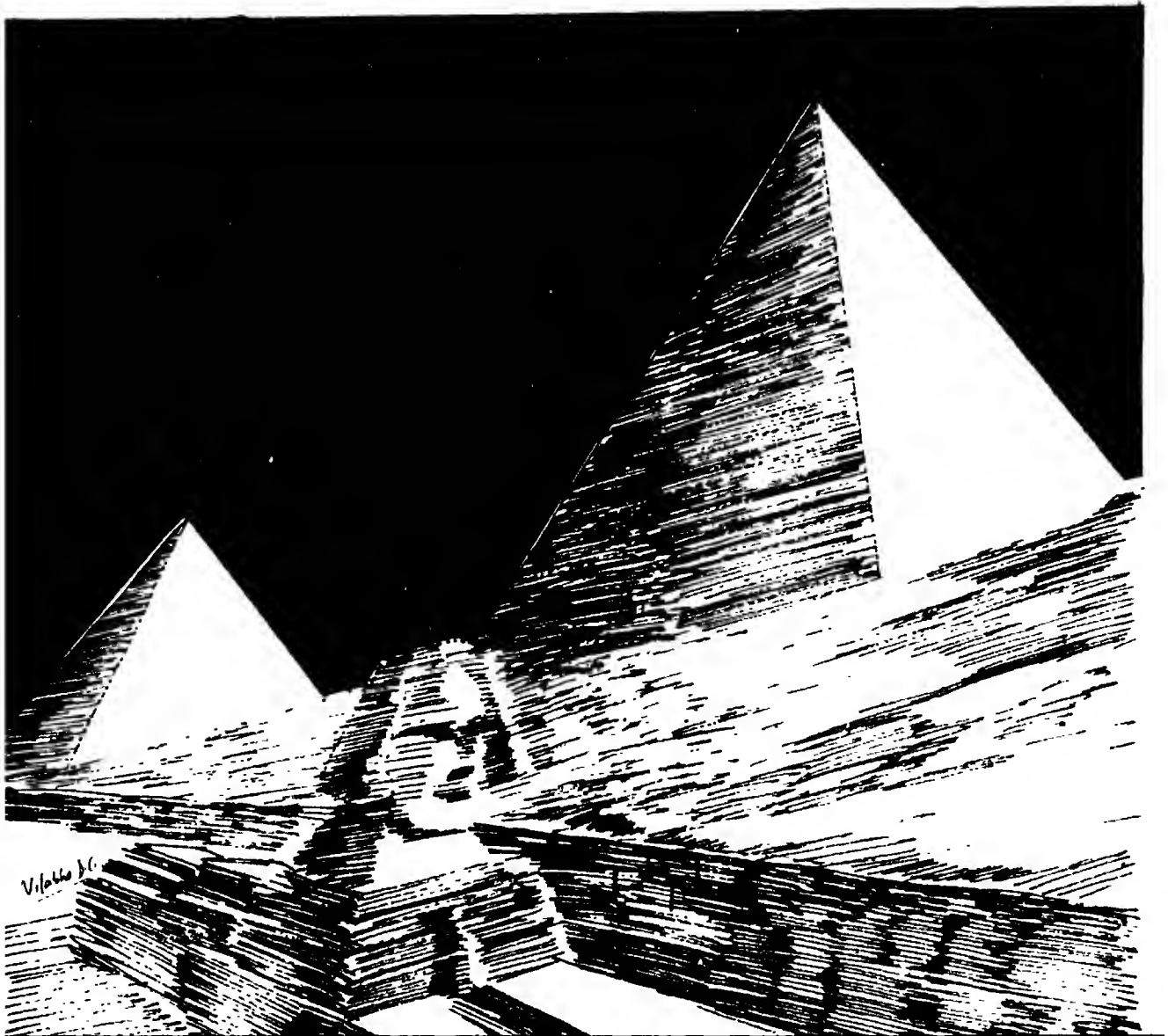
tourists from the world over.

* The Egyptian pyramids were built between 2700-1700 BC to bury their emperors. Some of them are still standing as testimony to the architectural capability of the ancient Egyptians. The tallest of the pyramids, Khufu, situated near Cairo, is 140 m high. Called the Great Pyramid, its base covers an area of

about 5 hectares. Its sheer magnitude can be gauged from the fact that it contains more than 2 million stone blocks that average 2.3 metric tonnes each!

* The first known pyramid was built by Imhotep, a great ancient Egyptian architect, in about 2650 BC. Built for King Zoser, it still stands near Saqqarah, in Egypt.

**Compiled by
Thangamani
Illustrations by Nilabho**



THE TORTOISE AND ITS BROKEN SHELL

(Based on an African folk tale)

Story: Anupriya

Illustrations: Beejee

ONCE upon a time, all the birds decided to get together for a feast in the sky. All of them were very excited and began to prepare for the big day. The female birds painted their lips and nails, while the male birds preened around. A cunning tortoise watched all the preparations and wanted to attend the feast. There was a famine in the jungle, and the greedy tortoise had not eaten a good meal for many days. He had been reduced to skin and bones due to starvation.

He began to plan how he would go to the sky. He suddenly realised that he had no wings so he couldn't fly like the birds.

So he went to the birds and asked them if he could go with them.

"We know you very well," said the birds when they heard his request. "You are cunning and ungrateful. If we allow you to come with us, you will soon begin your mischief."

"You do not know me," said the tortoise. "I am a changed person these days. I have learnt that a person who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself."

The tortoise had a sweet tongue and within a short time all the birds agreed that he was a changed person. Each of the birds gave him a feather. With these feathers he made himself a pair of wings.

At last the great day of the feast arrived and tortoise was the first to reach the meeting place. When all the birds had gathered, they started for the sky. The tortoise was very excited and talked all along the way because of which he was chosen the



speaker for the party.

"There is a very important thing which we must not forget," he said, as they all flew. "When important people are invited to a great feast like this, they are given new titles for the occasion. Our hosts in the sky will expect us to honour this age old custom."

None of the birds had heard of this custom but they felt that they should obey the tortoise since he was a wise and widely-travelled fellow. So they all took on new names for the evening. The tortoise called himself 'All of you'.

The hosts were very happy to see them. The tortoise, being the speaker, thanked the hosts for their invitation. He gave an impressive speech and the birds were very happy to have brought him along. The hosts mistook the tortoise for a king.

As soon as the food was brought in, the tortoise grew restless. He could not control his hunger and asked the hosts, "For whom have you prepared this feast?"

"For all of you," replied the hosts, surprised.

"The custom here is to serve the spokesman first. So they will serve you

when I have finished."

Saying this the tortoise started eating while the birds grumbled angrily. The tortoise continued eating till only a little bit of the food was left. He had been hungry too long and the delicious food

made him gorge himself. The birds decided to return home on an empty stomach, since there was hardly any food left after the tortoise finished eating. But they decided to teach him a lesson. They took their feathers



back and the tortoise had no wings left.

Now the tortoise was stuck. He kept asking the birds to take a message home to his wife asking her to bring out all the soft things in the house and cover the compound with them so that he could jump down. No one wanted to take his message.

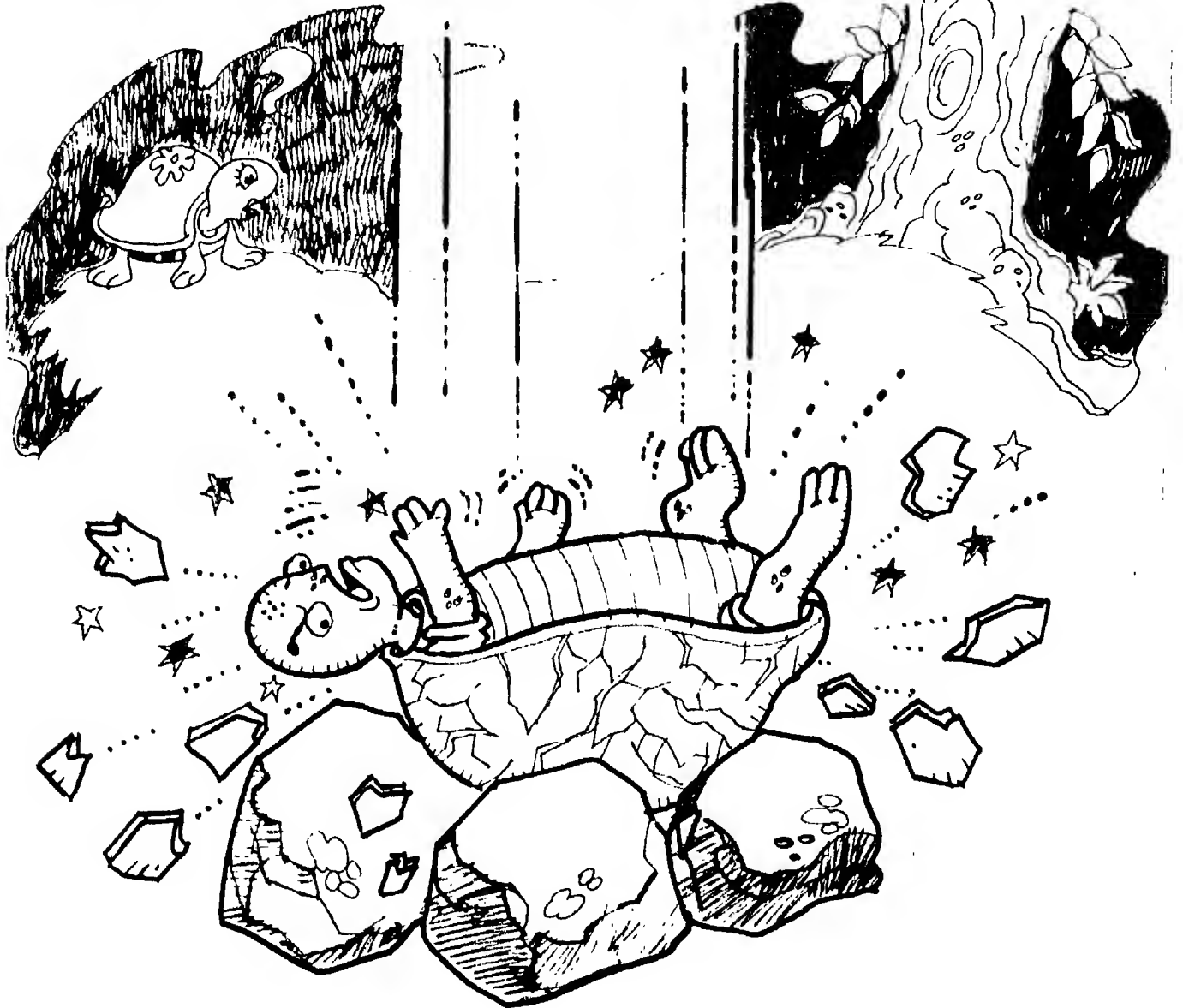
At last a parrot agreed to take the message to the

tortoise's wife. But he intentionally delivered a wrong message. He asked the tortoise's wife to lay out all the hard objects in their house outside. She was quite surprised but she did what she had been told to do and laid out all the hard objects outside their house.

The distance from the sky to the earth was so much that the tortoise could not identify the

objects. He jumped down. He fell with a big crash and his shell broke into many small pieces. With great difficulty, a doctor somehow put together the bits of his shell, but the cracks could not be hidden.

That is the reason why a tortoise has a shell which looks uneven and broken. From that day all the tortoises are cursed with a rough, uneven shell.

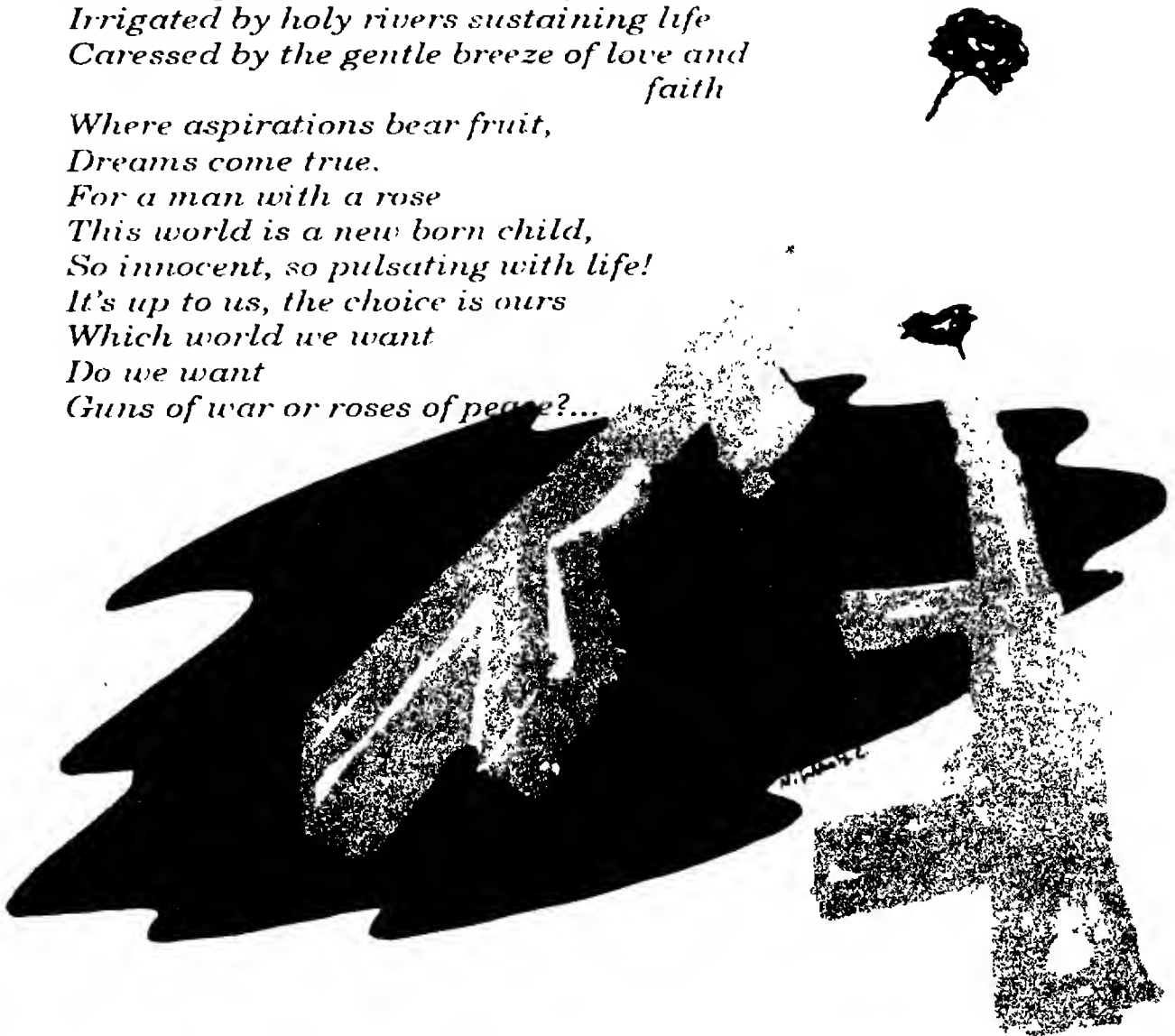


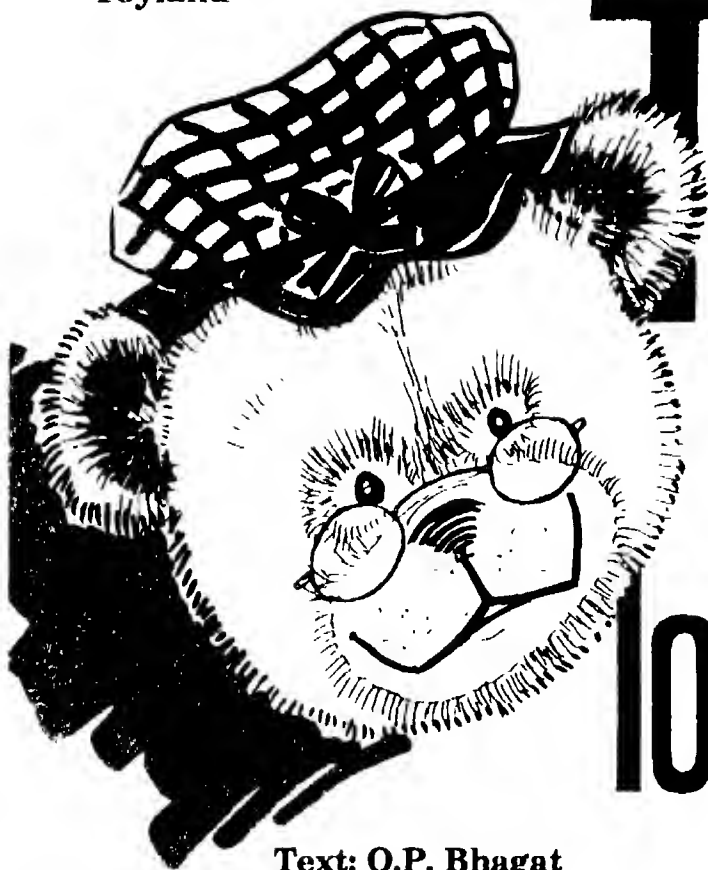
GUNS OR ROSES?

Mili Bhardwaj (15)

*Through the fires of war,
This world appears the home
Of people with hearts of stone
A world washed by oceans of tears,
Drained by rivers of sorrow
Lashed by cold winds of violence.
Where aspirations are stillborn,
Dreams freeze to snow.
For a man with a gun
This world is a coffin
Wailing and dead!
Through the mist of peace,
This world appears a haven,
For creations with hearts of gold
A world gifted with oceans of pearls,
Irrigated by holy rivers sustaining life
Caressed by the gentle breeze of love and
faith*

*Where aspirations bear fruit,
Dreams come true.
For a man with a rose
This world is a new born child,
So innocent, so pulsating with life!
It's up to us, the choice is ours
Which world we want
Do we want
Guns of war or roses of peace?...*





TEDDY:

The best-loved bear

Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

SOFT toys have long been there. That is, toys made of cloth and stuffed with cotton or rags. The stuffing may also be straw, sawdust or wood shavings. For that reason soft toys are also called stuffed toys.

The cloth may be plain or printed linen. More often it is lint. In expensive toys it is felt or velvet or plush.

Instead of cloth, it could be knitted wool. Such soft toys are a class by themselves. They are known as knitted toys. The dolls look quaint, but are cute in their own way.

Now we have what the makers call nature pets. They are soft toys, with dried petals or herbs inside. These, it is claimed, are good for children's health.

Apart from dolls, there are toy animals. Softness is these toys' plus point. The child can hug or cuddle them. That is why some people call them cuddlies. Even a toddler can safely play with them. Some children take them to bed.

On top among the favourite animal soft toys, is the bear. This may seem strange. For, with

its big bulk and shaggy hair, the bear is anything but attractive. It is notorious for its rough behaviour too.

But it can stand upright on its legs. That makes it look like a man. It can also hug (though too heavily) like a man. With their feats and frolic, the performing bears seem all the more human.

That is why bears figure in fables, fairy tales and other old stories. In Russian tales a bear often goes by the name of Mishka. In some other European yarns its name is Bruin.

In the story of 'Snow White and Rose Red', a good prince, under a witch's spell, has to live in the form of a bear for some time. 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' is a nursery favourite.

As a toy, the bear is known as teddy bear or teddy. Do not confuse it with Teddy boy—a youth affecting Edwardian style of dress.

The toy bear is a European or Western plaything. In India the animals liked as toys are cow,

lion or tiger and elephant. The other Asian countries prefer their own animals.

As teddy, the bear is now a world toy. It has its lovers everywhere.

How did the toy bear come to be called teddy? There is an interesting story behind it.

It was November 1902. In the U.S.A., the states of Louisiana and Mississippi had a border dispute. President Theodore Roosevelt went to settle it.

Teddy Roosevelt was fond of hunting. He was

offered a bear to shoot. But the animal he was shown was a cub, tied with a rope. A true sportsman that he was, Roosevelt turned away from it.

In the November 18 issue of the *Washington Evening Star* appeared a cartoon. In it Clifford Berryman showed how the President had drawn the line at shooting a little bear. It was a pun on the border Roosevelt had drawn.

At that time in Brook-



lyn lived a Russian immigrant, Morris Michtom. With his wife he ran a candy store. The couple also sold homemade toys.

Michtom had the Russian interest in and affection for bears. The cartoon inspired him to make a toy. He placed it—“Teddy’s bear”—along with the cartoon in his shop window.

It sold in no time. So did all the toy bears the Michtoms made. At this the man wrote to the President, asking if he could call his toy ‘Teddy’. The President wrote back that he had no objection.

Such was the demand for Teddy bears that Michtom became a toy manufacturer.

Though Teddy was a novelty, the toy bear was nothing new. Russian children had for centuries played with Mishka bears.

Mishka was the 1982 Moscow Olympic Games mascot. At the opening ceremony there was a chorus of dancing Mishkas.

In a few years Teddy bears were selling in many U.S. cities. As the years passed, the toy became more popular. Now it was not only popular in America but also in Europe and beyond.



Many toymakers made teddies on both sides of the Atlantic. And in each country they were made for sale at home and

abroad.

Teddy bears come in all sizes and colours. It may be a small one or a foot or two tall. Or it may be as

tall as the boy or the girl who plays with it. Some outsize specimens are up to, or more than, six feet tall.

The look varies from maker to maker. Otherwise it is the same snout and ears and button eyes. If one teddy is sitting, another may be standing. If one is plump, another is slim.

The arms and legs may or may not move. If, on squeezing, one cries, another may not. Often its soft or fluffy, or shaggy hair is its clothing. But some teddies are dressed in frocks, shorts and overalls.

Some teddies come in formal dress. In a top hat, frock coat and striped pants, for example. Or in a three-piece suit, with a watch in a waistcoat pocket.

Or a couple may be dressed like a bride and groom.

Toy koala bears and panda bears are also there. But remember that neither koalas nor pandas are bears, though they look so.

Poems and stories have been written about teddy bears too. Some of these books have become classics.

Such are A.A. Milne's two volumes of stories,

Winnie the Pooh and *The House at Pooh Corner*.

Also Michael Bond's Paddington stories.

Add to these the books that tell the real story of the toy bear. The latest is Josa Keyes' *The Teddy Bear Story*.

Teddy riddles are there as well. Sample this. Question: "If Theodore is President when dressed, what is he when undressed?" Answer: "Teddy Bare!"

Smokey Bear is the symbol of the U.S. Forest Service's anteforest fire campaign. There are films, cards and calendars. And teddy pictures on bags and in newspaper ads.

The doll is one of the oldest toys. But it has not lost its appeal even in the last years of the 20th century. You know what a sensation Barbie has created.

But the teddy is more popular than the doll. With the dolls only, or mostly, girls play. The teddy is for both boys and girls.

Then the doll is for young girls. Or, at the most, for girls in their teens. So are their favourite toys for boys. But for teddy lovers there is no age bar.

Both older boys and

girls have teddies. Some men and women also have teddies. They make no secret of it. Rather, they proudly show them to their friends and others.

Among the teddy lovers are some famous people—writers, travellers, singers and TV and cinema stars. They have not one or two but hugs or collections of teddies.

Like dolls museums, there are teddy museums. At auctions rare teddies go for fabulous prices.

In what does the teddy magic lie? It is in the expression on its face. It is innocent and endearing. Moreover, the teddy can be cuddled better than a doll or any other toy.

Older people do not play with teddies. But they find them good company. They are their silent companions. They give them much solace in their loneliness.

That is why teddies are sent as gifts to the sick or patients in hospitals. In some countries policemen carry teddies to befriend children. Teddies at once comfort children who are sad or suffering.

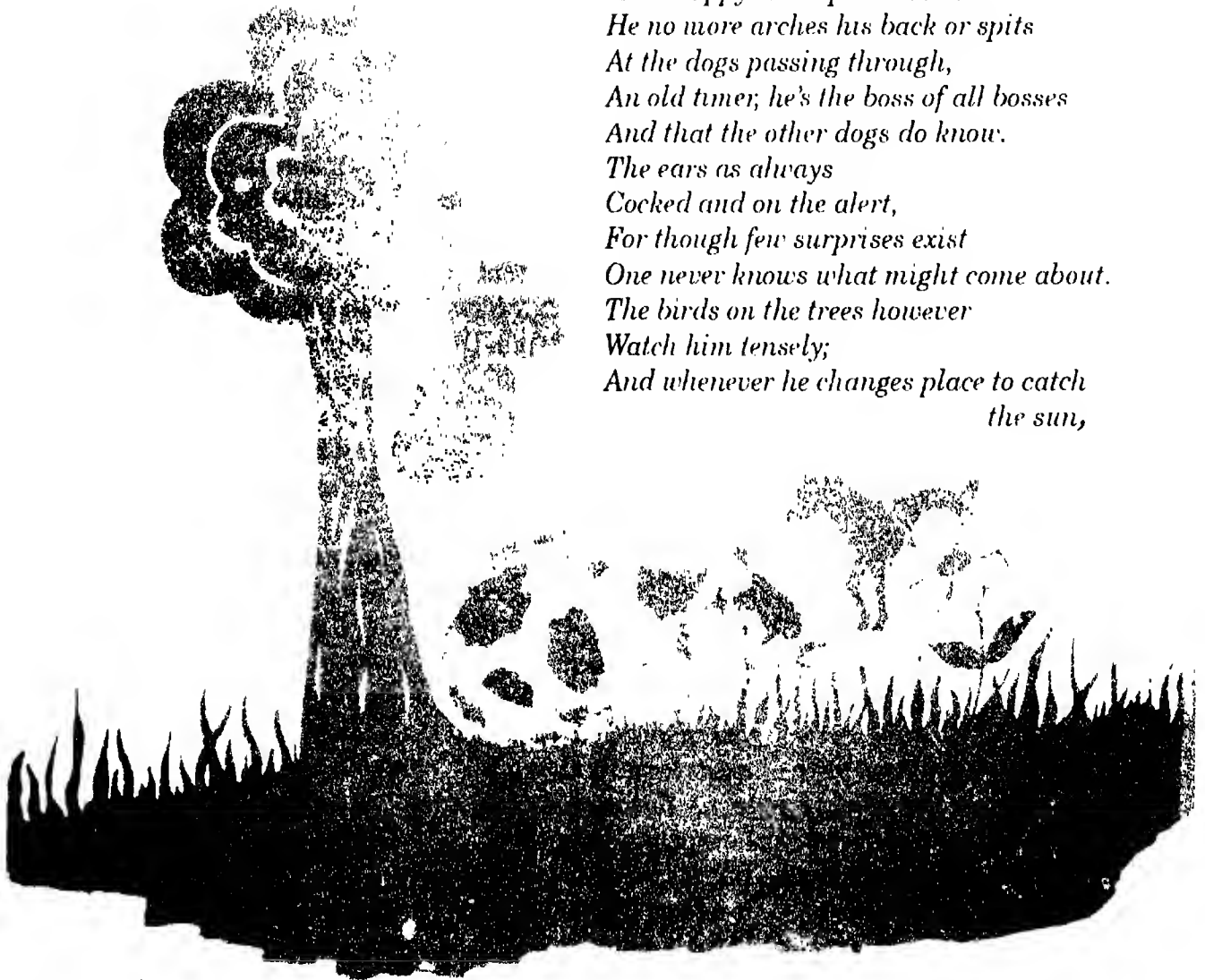
Even old or discarded teddies, which are gifted by many, bring happiness to countless children all over the world.

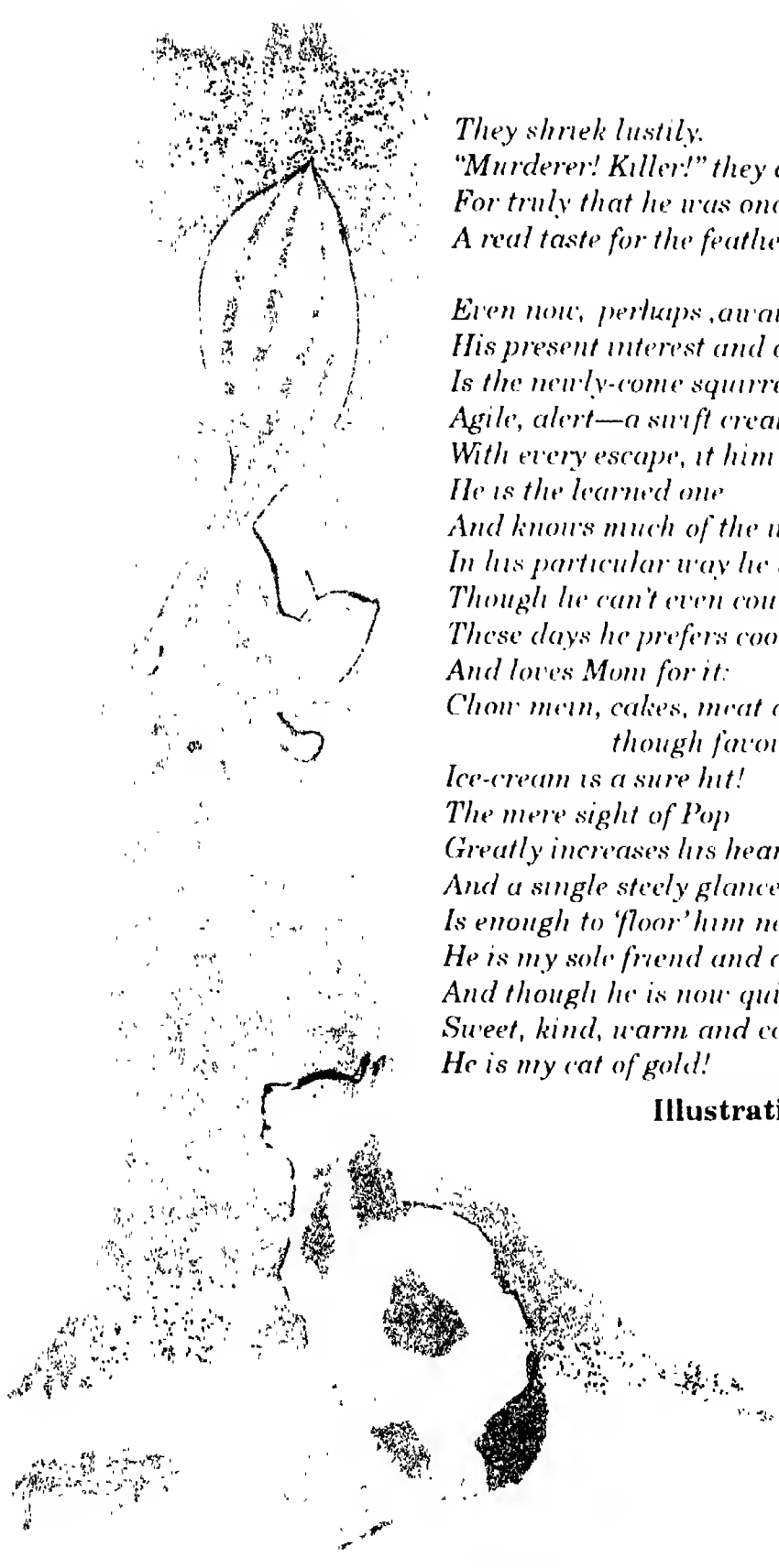
OLD BUDDY

Pranjal Goswami (18)

*He no longer jumps at the butterflies
Or leaps at quivering grass,
The once hunted frogs and toads
Stare at him as they pass.
He bothers no more with the ping-pong
ball*

*Nor does he chase the dragonfly,
The falling leaves are no longer tempting
Contentedly in the sun he does lie.
With disdain he licks away
The big red ants that try to bite him,
With a carefreeness that comes with age
He is happy to sleep and dream.
He no more arches his back or spits
At the dogs passing through,
An old timer, he's the boss of all bosses
And that the other dogs do know.
The ears as always
Cocked and on the alert,
For though few surprises exist
One never knows what might come about.
The birds on the trees however
Watch him tensely;
And whenever he changes place to catch
the sun,*





*They shriek lustily.
"Murderer! Killer!" they call him
For truly that he was once,
A real taste for the feathered friends he
had,
Even now, perhaps, awaits a chance.
His present interest and desire
Is the newly-come squirrel in the trees,
Agile, alert—a swift creature;
With every escape, it him does tease.
He is the learned one
And knows much of the world and of men;
In his particular way he knows,
Though he can't even count upto ten!
These days he prefers cooked food
And loves Mom for it:
Chow mein, cakes, meat and fish—
though favourite these
Ice-cream is a sure hit!
The mere sight of Pop
Greatly increases his heartbeat,
And a single steely glance,
Is enough to 'floor' him neat!
He is my sole friend and confidante
And though he is now quite old
Sweet, kind, warm and comforting
He is my cat of gold!*

Illustrations: Nilabho

CROSSROADS 5

Geographically Yours!

S.S.

This time it's your knowledge of geography that's put to test. Meant for our younger readers, *Geographically Yours!* deals with facts and terms that are so much a part of our daily life. Let's see how much you know about good old Mother Earth!

CLUES

Across

5. Areas of high atmospheric pressure over the oceans (5, 9)

8. Deepest point in the Pacific Ocean (7, 6)

9. Grasslands of North America (8)

11. Country whose capital is Port-Au-Prince (5)

14. Wildlife sanctuary in Rajasthan (11)

16. Scale by which the intensity of an earthquake is measured (7)

19. The alternate rise and fall of the level of the sea (5)

21. The capital of Maldives (4)

22. Organic matter in the soil (5)

24. The scientific method to determine the age of fossils or archaeological remains (6, 6)

25. Capital of Lakshadweep (9)

Down

1. A person who makes maps (12)

2. Fine rock materials or sediment which has been carried along by a river and afterwards deposited (7)

3. Highest peak of the Himalayas in India (5, 4)

4. Low pressure belt near the Equator (8)

6. Mass of ice and snow that slides down a mountain slope, often accompanied by large quantities of rock (9)

7. Narrow strip of land joining two larger areas (7)

10. A type of rock (7)

12. Line on map joining places having equal atmospheric pressure (6)

13. Mineral consisting of silica that forms the greater part of sands and sandstone (6)

15. One of the 'seven sisters' (8)

17. Southernmost tip of South America (4, 4)

18. The study of weather (11)

20. An area of flat land at the mouth of the river made by deposits from the river (5)

23. A place in the desert made fertile by the presence of water (5)

Hurry up and send in the completed crossword!

Last date for receiving entries: May 15, 1996. The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year gift subscription to *Children's World*.

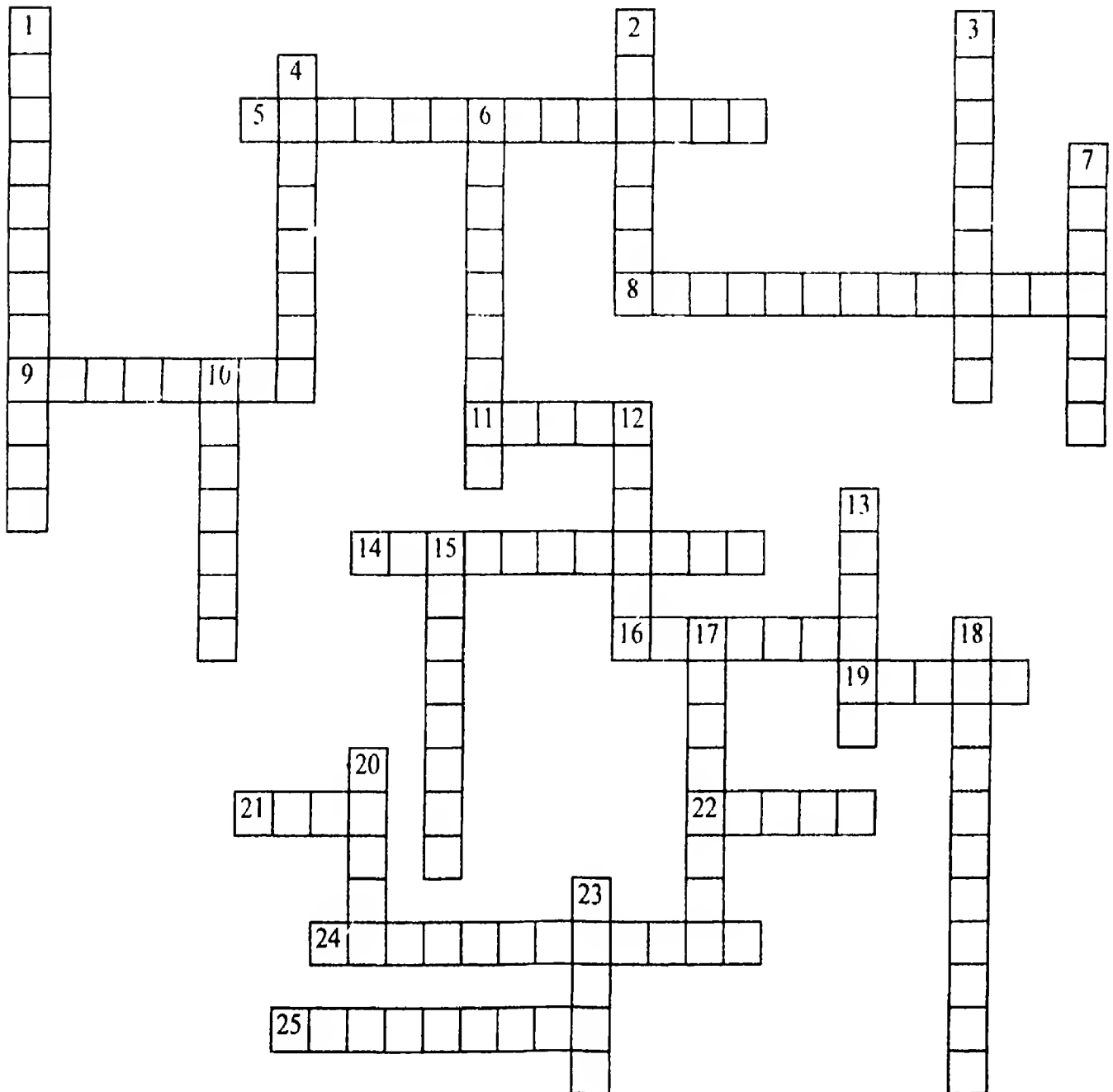
Answers and results in the July 1996 issue.

No all correct entries received for Crossroads 3

Personally Yours (March 1996 issue).

CROSSROADS 5

Geographically Yours!





...and then there were none

Story: Anil Aggrawal

Illustrations: Beejee

IT ALL began with Tarun's strange request. I had no idea what dinosaur meat tasted like and, God knows, I would never have bothered about it either, till suddenly, one fine day, my twelve-year-old son, Tarun, developed a fancy for it, and told me to arrange for dinosaur meat somehow. I don't know what had happened to bring about this strange request, but my wife tells me that his teacher told him about dinosaurs that day, and showed him—rather the whole class—some pictures of the extinct species. Tarun developed an immediate fancy for dinosaurs and wanted to have dinosaur meat straightaway. Instead of trying to know

more about their lifestyles, how they became extinct, and so on, he wanted to eat their meat. The glutton!

Well, living in the 23rd century is not easy. Way back in the 20th century, in my forefathers' time, children could be managed more easily. They could be calmed down with things like video games, computers, chocolates and similar things. But 23rd century kids are really fussy. They have seen too much of all that stuff and cannot be hoodwinked so easily.

To add to this is the weird state law about preventing cruelty to children which, among other things, stipulates that all 'genuine' demands of children have to be met by their parents. If the

demands are not met, parents could be fined heavily. I personally know of some cases in which the parents were even imprisoned. I do not know how the state construes a 'genuine' demand; but even my limited knowledge of law was sufficient for me to realise that Tarun's demand would be considered as 'genuine', and I could be in trouble if I did not meet his demand.

Certainly in an age of cloning, procuring dinosaur meat was not difficult. Anything which is not difficult to arrange by the parents, and does not have a negative or depraving influence on the physical, psychological and moral character of children could be con-

strued as a 'genuine' demand.

Well, I must first tell you what cloning is, in case you are unaware of it. It is a scientific technique whereby one can develop a whole living organism out of just one complete and intact cell, or even from a, say, computer printout of the organism's DNA battery.

DNA is a huge chemical, shaped rather like a twisted ladder. It resides in the nuclei of the cells of all organisms. It is the essence, the soul, if you so like, of these cells. It is responsible for the full physical make-up of an organism, and if one knows the whole DNA sequence, the organism can practically be grown out of nothing. One simply synthesized the requisite DNA in a test-tube, gave it a proper medium to replicate, and it would prepare the organism by itself. In fact DNA is something like a die. Once you 'cast' the die, the resulting gadget gets manufactured practically all by itself!

In the 23rd century mankind had the DNA complement of all the organisms which ever existed on earth. So I requested the DNA complement of a *Tyranno-*

saurus Rex from **The Genbank**, the largest library of DNA anywhere in India.

You might ask how the DNA complement of the dinosaurs had been acquired in the first place. Well, the answer is not difficult. Some insects of the Jurassic period which fed on dinosaur blood, accidentally got trapped in amber, a golden-coloured sap secreted by certain trees. Human beings in the 21st century retrieved

those mosquitoes, took out blood cells from their gut and prepared the whole DNA complement from the nuclei found in those cells. The DNA complement of all the dinosaurs had been catalogued in this way.

I had to pay a hefty sum of Rs.5,000 for the DNA complement of *Tyrannosaurus Rex*. As usual, the library gave me a form to fill in which I had to state the reason for requesting the DNA



produce more than the normal quantities of histamine. So it appeared, the bodies of *all* dinosaurs had large quantities of histamine.

I do not know how this mutation came about. But I can make a reasonable guess. Administration of histamine in big doses liberates large doses of adrenalin from the adrenal medulla.

Excuse me for introducing some complicated terms once again so suddenly, but I shall try to explain. Adrenal medulla is the core of a gland sitting on the top of each kidney. It secretes a hormone, adrenalin, which prepares us for 'fight, flight and fright'! If you are angry and want to hit someone, the adrenal medulla within your body starts liberating lot of adrenalin. Adrenalin increases your blood pressure, increases your respiratory rate and does some other important things to your body, which make it easier for you to hit that person. If a mouse is terrified on seeing a cat, the adrenal medulla within his body starts liberating more adrenalin, so that it can flee. Adrenalin is thus a hormone of 'fight, flight and fright'.

Now, what was happening at the end of Jurassic period? Mammals evolved which were eating the eggs and young of these large, lumbering dinosaurs. The dinosaurs being too bulky to be able to move as quickly as small mammals, like rats, could not protect them from the sprightly mammals. In an effort to compensate, the evolutionary forces equipped their histamine gene with a 'multiplier gene', which could increase the supply of histamine. As we have seen, large doses of histamine liberate adrenalin from adrenal medulla. Adrenalin was required in great quantities to attack these small mammals; and hence this mutation.

But what really happened? We all know that nature is blind. It strives to equip the organism with the best possible solution, but sometimes even evolutionary forces can go haywire. Providing more adrenalin was not really a solution for these enormously bulky dinosaurs. They needed something better than that; something radically different. But once evolution starts in a particular direction, accidentally or otherwise, it would tend to proceed in that direction

only.

In this 'runaway evolution', the multiplier gene began getting stronger and stronger, till it began generating too much histamine. Too much histamine was naturally not good for the health of dinosaurs. It can cause the heart to beat extremely fast and irregularly; so fast and irregularly that it is dangerous to life. The condition is technically known as 'ventricular fibrillation'. The dinosaurs began suffering from ventricular fibrillation as a matter of routine, and ultimately got wiped out from this planet. *They became extinct!*

Well, what did I say? They became extinct! Oh! so now I know why dinosaurs became extinct! Thanks to Tarun, and his weird request, I discovered the reason. The problem has baffled scientists for long. Some more tests and investigations by paleobiologists—the scientists who study the biology of ancient and extinct creatures—confirmed my conjecture. Dinosaur meat turned out to be fascinating not only for Tarun, but for me as well! I have been nominated for the 'Intergalactic Science Award' next year...

NOVEMBER 1996 YOUR PAGES Special Issue

It is that time of the year again when
exams are but a bad dream
the new academic session has begun
new books make lessons interesting—
at least for a while
summer holidays loom large...

Children's World invites entries for its
November Your Pages...

So if you are below 18 years of age, send in stories,
anecdotes, memoirs, jokes, poems, riddles, quizzes,
anything and everything that will make the
November 1996 **Your Pages** a special issue.

Address all entries to

**Editor
Children's World
Nehru House
4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg
New Delhi 110002**

Last date: July 31, 1996

***All entries must have the contributor's full name,
age, class and the name of the school.***

COOL SWEETS FOR SUMMER

Recipes by Mani

Hot summer days always make you feel you want something cold and nice to eat. Something that does not come out of a ready-to-eat packet, or from Mummy's / Daddy's routine 'something nice to munch' cook-book. Here are a few things you could crunch and sip during the summer holidays, if you care to rustle them up for yourselves.

CHOCOLATE CRUNCHIES

INGREDIENTS:

Sugar: 25 gms

Cocoa powder: 25 gms

Golden syrup: 1 table-
spoon

or Sugar and water:
25 gms

Rice crispies (*murmura*)
or cornflakes: 2 cups

Butter or margarine:
50 gms

METHOD:

1. Grease a baking tray.

2. Put rice crispies in a
bowl.

3. Put butter, sugar and
golden syrup in a pan and
heat gently, stirring all
the time with a wooden
spoon until the butter and
the sugar have melted.

Remove from heat.

4. Add ~~cocoa~~ and mix
well.

and sugar and whisk until frothy and the sugar has melted.

2. Add a few ice-cubes and whisk. If a liquidiser is used add milk, flavouring, sugar and ice-cubes and liquidise for 30 seconds. Pour into 2 glasses and top with ice-cream and serve.

CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

INGREDIENTS:

Eggs: 2

Chocolate: 50 gms

METHOD:

1. Half fill a flat pan with water and allow it to boil. Turn off the heat.

2. Break chocolate into pieces and put into a small bowl. Place the bowl in the pan of hot water and let the chocolate melt.

3. Break the eggs and carefully separate the yolks from the white.

4. Beat the white in a bowl until stiff.

5. Remove the chocolate from the hot water pan and stir in the egg yolk.

6. Fold the chocolate mixture into the white of the egg with a knife-lightly. If mixed too much the mousse will not set.

7. Pour into individual dishes and leave to cool.

8. Chocolate mousse can be decorated with grated chocolate, roasted dessicated coconut, roasted nuts etc.

5. Pour the mixture into the rice crispies and gently stir until they are well-coated.

6. Drop the mixture tablespoon by tablespoon into the tray, until the mixture is all used up. Please see that one portion of the mixture does not touch the other.

7. Allow to cool before storing or eating.

MILK SHAKE

(2 glasses)

INGREDIENTS:

Chilled milk: 250 ml

Sugar 1 level dessert spoon or to taste

Ice cubes: a few

Ice creams: 1 cup (100 ml) or as desired

Flavouring: 2 teaspoons cocoa powder or 1 ripe banana peeled and cut or 1 mango peeled and cut

or Vanilla essence

METHOD:

1. Place milk, flavouring

Reader of the month: Dipavali Debroy

YOU must have read in the papers that cows in Britain face the prospect of mass slaughter because they have got Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, a killer disease which may spread even to humans and create havoc among all those who eat beef or beef products. Your hearts must have gone out to the poor creatures, being treated almost like

'wanted criminals'.

The book to cheer you up now—and perhaps give you a sense of direction—is *All Creatures Great and Small* by James Herriot who called himself 'veterinarian'. First pub-

bestseller is easily available in bookshops and libraries. In personal collections, it is usually a cherished possession.

The book describes two years in the life of a 'penniless' youth from Glasgow, Scotland, who qualified as MRCVS (Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) in 1937 and went on to Darrowby in the Yorkshire countryside as assistant to a practis-

ing veterinarian, Siegfried Farnon, also a young man.

The book opens with Herriot's struggles with a cow about to calf. "They didn't say anything about this in the books, I thought, as the snow blew in through the gaping

doorway and settled on my naked back" (p1). "This" meant 'calling' on the 'patient' at 2 a.m. over 12 miles of frozen snow, lying in a pool of muck on a cobbled floor, scrabbling for a toe hold between the stones, thrusting a limp and tired arm into the cow... But "This" also meant the sense of fulfillment that came to Herriot when, at last, the mother began to lick her newborn.

In 67 brief chapters, *All Creatures Great and Small* describes all sorts of experiences that Herriot had in the Yorkshire dales, culminating in his marrying Helen Alderson, a farmer's daughter, and settling

down as partner to Siegfried Farnon.

It tells us, for example, how Herriot saved a cow from dying of 'milk fever' by giving her a shot of calcium, then a novelty. It gives us a blow-by-blow account of removing a wire from the 'second stomach' of a cow, with Siegfried's spotless smock and gleaming instruments getting ruined by the smelly stomach contents that "erupted from the depths of the cow" (p186). It has us breathlessly participating in Herriot's delivery of the twin calves, one of which had to be sent back every time it came forward because it was blocking the other's way. In the touching story of Terry who sat up beside his sick cow "right round the clock", the book reveals what wonderful care farmers could give their cattle. It gives quite another insight into the world of animal husbandry when it shows up Mr. Cranford trying to get a false certificate out of Herriot: to the effect that

the death of his cow was due to a stroke of lightning, the calamity against which all farmers were insured.

The book is not just about cows, but horses, pigs, sheep, dogs and cats—as well as the people of Yorkshire. This is, about all creatures great and small. Going through this book, you will chuckle at Siegfried's (wildly contradictory) lectures to his young assistant, and the pranks of his happy-go-lucky brother, Tristan. Your eyes will mist over the story of Mr. Dean—poor but loving. You will get repelled by details about the "knacker yard" with its dismembered animals and bloated carcasses. You will feel uplifted by lyrical descriptions "of the vast, swelling glory of the Dales around us, and of the Dales scent of clover and warm grass, more intoxicating than any wine" (p 498).

And then, soothed as well as energised, do go on to read the rest of James

Herriot: *All Things Bright And Beautiful, All Things Wise and Wonderful, The Lord God Made Them All*, and *James Herriot's Yorkshire* (Bantam Books), *It Shouldn't Happen To A Vet, Let Sleeping Vets Lie, Vets Might Fly, Every Living Thing, Seven Yorkshire Tales* (Penguin Books), and *James Herriot's Dog Stories* (published by Michael Joseph Ltd. London). Televised (by BBC) or condensed (e.g. in *Reader's Digest*, September 1987), a James Herriot story is always a delight.

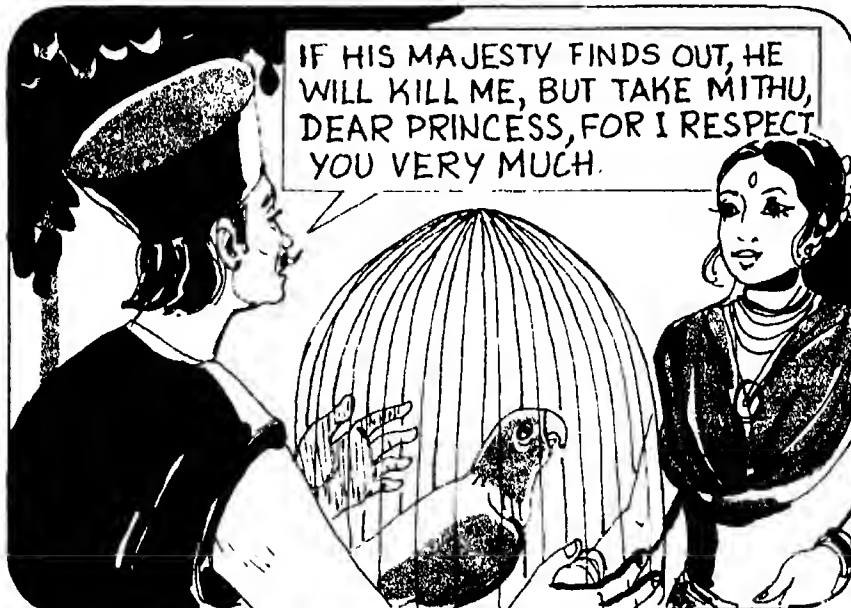
It can be more.

Ours is a country which reveres but cannot take care of its vast animal population. Here we need young people like James Herriot who was born in a big city, trained in a reputed institution, but dedicated his life to the countryside. Read *All Creatures Great and Small* and see if you feel like following in James Herriot's footsteps.

The Princess and the Parrot



STORY : SUNANDA KATHALAY
ILLUSTRATIONS : Beejee



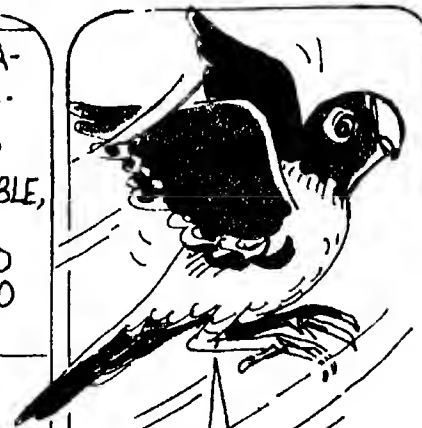
IF HIS MAJESTY FINDS OUT, HE
WILL KILL ME, BUT TAKE MITHU,
DEAR PRINCESS, FOR I RESPECT
YOU VERY MUCH.



THANK YOU,
KIND PRINCESS,
FOR SAVING
MY LIFE. I'LL
FLY AWAY NOW
LEST THE KING
FINDS OUT.



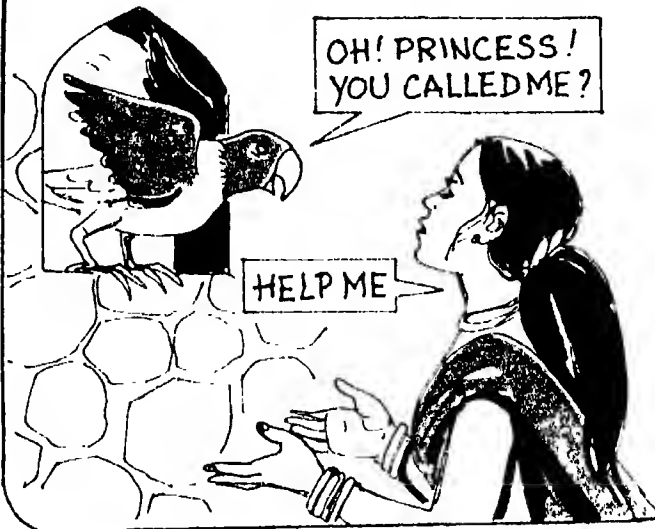
HERE IS A FEA-
THER OF MINE.
IF EVER YOU
NEED ME OR
ARE IN TROUBLE,
KISS THE
FEATHER AND
I'LL COME TO
HELP YOU.



GOOD LUCK,
DEAR PRINCESS.



THERE WAS A FLAPPING OF WINGS...

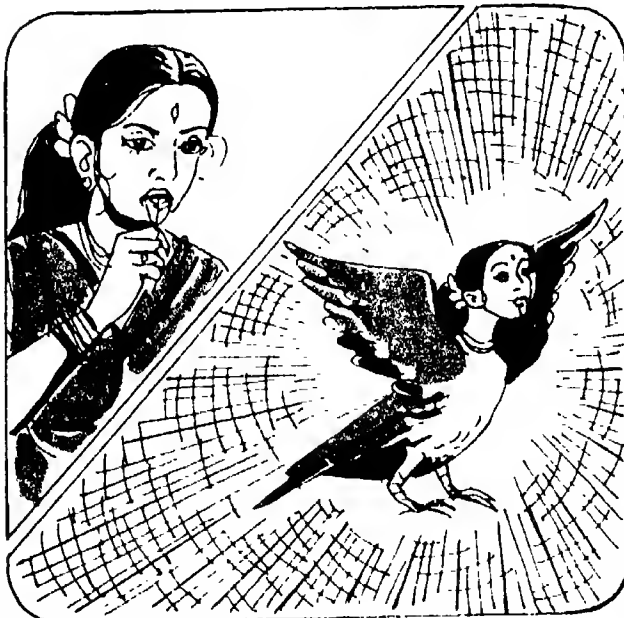


OH! PRINCESS!
YOU CALLED ME?

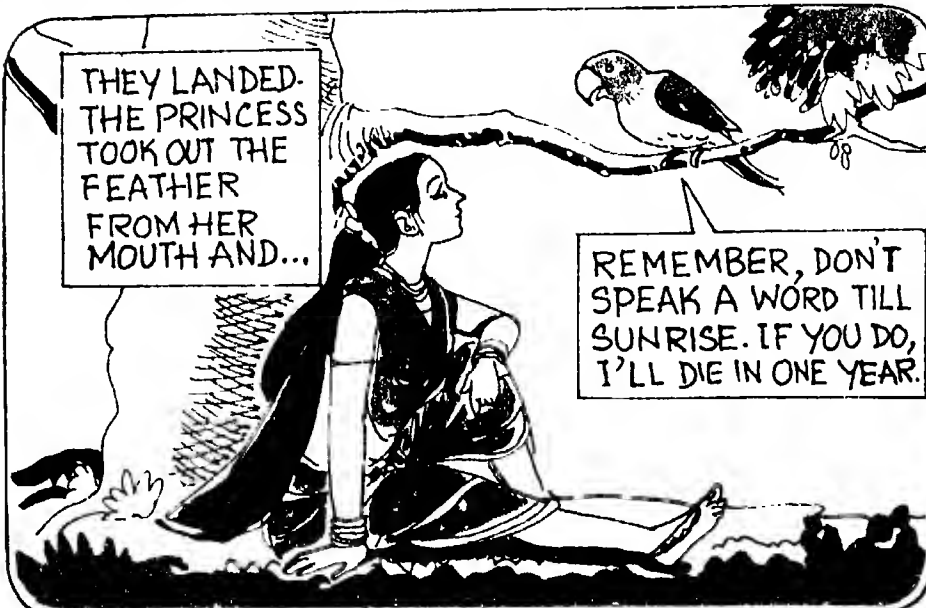
HELP ME



PUT ONE OF MY FEATHERS IN
YOUR MOUTH. YOU'LL BECOME A
BIRD. FLY OFF. WHEN YOU REACH
A SAFE PLACE, TAKE THE
FEATHER OUT. YOU'LL CHANGE
BACK TO YOURSELF.



THE PRINCESS AND THE PARROT
FLEW OFF.

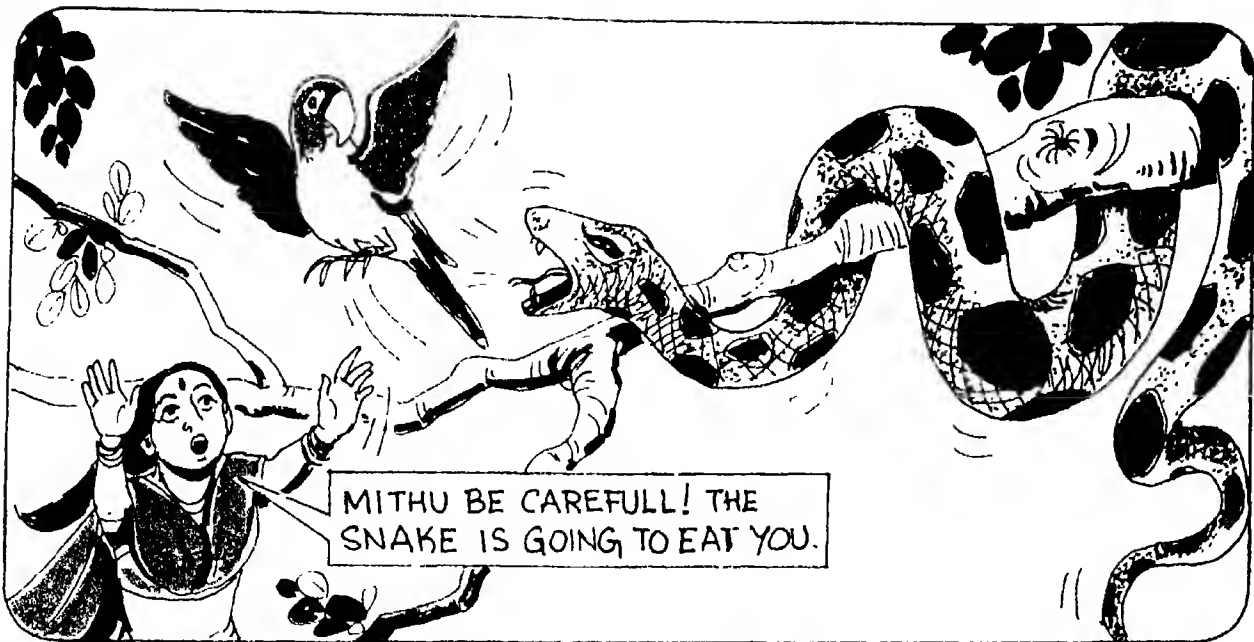


THEY LANDED.
THE PRINCESS
TOOK OUT THE
FEATHER
FROM HER
MOUTH AND...

REMEMBER, DON'T
SPEAK A WORD TILL
SUNRISE. IF YOU DO,
I'LL DIE IN ONE YEAR.

SUDDENLY THE
PRINCESS SAW...





MITHU BE CAREFULL! THE SNAKE IS GOING TO EAT YOU.



OH! MITHU! IF I HAD NOT SPOKEN, YOU WOULD BE DEAD. BUT NOW, YOU'LL DIE WITHIN ONE YEAR!...

OH! I WISH I COULD SAVE YOU SOMEHOW.



THERE'S ONE WAY OUT. IN THE RED SEA, ON A SMALL ISLAND ARE FIVE COCONUT TREES...



...IF YOU CAN BRING ME JUICE OF ONE RED COCONUT, I'LL LIVE. BUT BE CAREFUL. THERE ARE MANY DANGERS. HERE IS A BERRY. EAT IT AND YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE OF THE ANIMALS AND BIRDS.

CONT'D

SAVING DAL LAKE FROM EXTINCTION



**Text: Radhakrishna
Rao
CEE-NFS**

JUST as the breathtakingly beautiful Kashmir valley is considered a paradise on earth, the shimmering, sprawling Dal lake, located, as if in the heart of Srinagar, has been called the crest jewel of Kashmir valley. The renowned Dal lake, a major tourist attraction in Kashmir, is facing slow and sure death on account of gross human

interference with its finely tuned ecosystem. An environmental timebomb is currently ticking under its once crystal clear layers of shimmering water. If something drastic is not done immediately, the lake will die out in the none too distant future.

Over the years, Dal lake has not only become a silent and helpless

victim of encroachment but also a convenient dumping ground for household garbage and effluents released by hotels and tourist resorts around it. Thick algal overgrowth has further degraded the lake environment. Indeed, like many other lakes and water bodies in other parts of India, Dal is the victim of human assault

from a variety of directions.

Located picturesquely at an altitude of 1500 metres above sea level, the lake is home to about 200 houseboats which regularly dump all their wastes and effluents into the waters of the lake. Dal lake is also afflicted by heavy siltation. Small wonder then that the lake which covered an expanse of 48 sq.km in 1847 has now shrunk to a mere 15 sq.km. The proliferation of algae—an indication of high levels of biological pollution—has turned the once clear waters of the lake into a dull red. The algal proliferation has rendered the waters of the lake unfit for human consumption besides hindering the growth of the fish population that once flourished in the lake. The luxuriant algal growth can, in turn, be traced to the dumping of human waste and refuse into the lake. The unchecked assault on Dal lake forced the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to form a high-powered Dal Development Board in order to restore the pristine splendour of the lake. However, the Rs.200 crore project aimed at averting the pollution facing the lake did not

make much headway.

In 1993, an emergency meeting of the State Pollution Control Board decided that a multi-pronged strategy was essential to halt the growth of algae, water hyacinth and pathogenic bacterial species *E. coli* in the Dal lake. The abundance of nutrient-rich domestic sewage was blamed for the biological pollution of the lake. In order to free the lake from the threat of vegetation it was suggested that a massive mechanical dewatering programme be launched. Similarly an ambitious plantation drive has been initiated in the catchment area by the Soil Conservation Department so as to avert the threat of siltation. On its part the Gardens and Parks Department of the state government has agreed to buy weeds extracted from the depths of Dal lake for use as fertilizer in the Moghul Gardens.

On another front, the Jammu and Kashmir state administration has taken steps to occupy chunks of land that had been illegally encroached upon, in order to convert it into a water body. There is also a move to persuade vegetable growers in the

vicinity of the lake to shift to new areas, as vegetable growing areas adjacent to the lake have been found to be a major source of pollution.

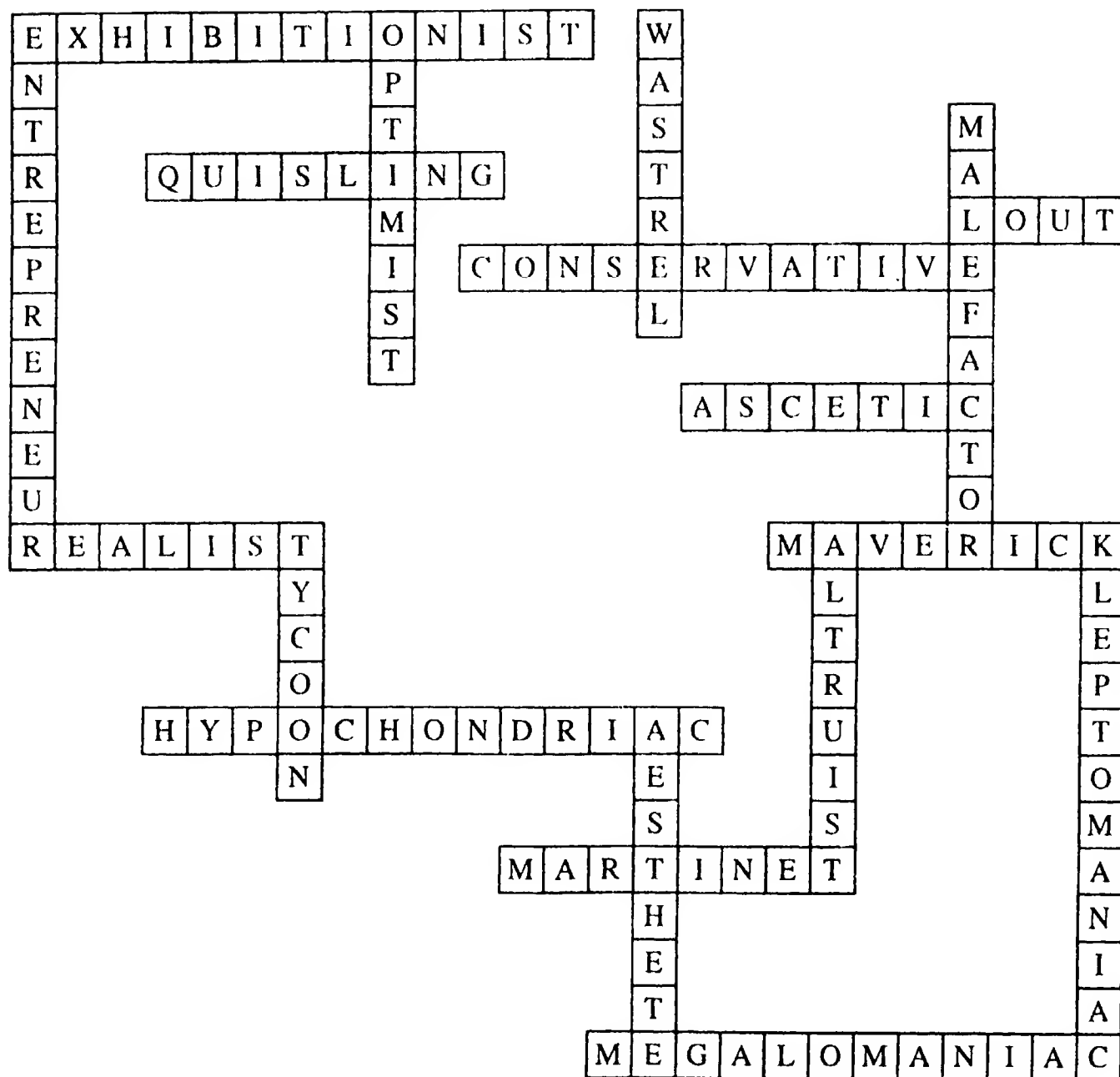
The concern for the health of Dal lake is so widespread, that even militant organizations have decided not to interfere with the process of restoring the environmental balance of the valley's most important water body. "It is the duty of every Kashmiri to work with full zeal to restore its grandeur," says an official associated with Srinagar-based Urban Environment Engineering Department. Meanwhile a special task force, headed by the Deputy Commissioner of Srinagar, is engaged in the creation of a green belt around the lake by pulling down all illegal construction along the periphery of the lake.

Perhaps Kashmir can take a leaf out of the experience gained in the cleaning of Pichola and Swarup Sagar lake in Udaipur mainly through the voluntary efforts of the people. These lakes once carpeted with a green mass of water hyacinth are now shimmering with a new vitality.

Answers to Crossroads 3

Personally Yours!

(See Children's World March 1996)



SMALL BEGINNINGS

Story: Neelamani Bhatia

Illustrations: Beejee

ONLY a week of the long summer holidays had passed and time had already begun to hang heavy on their hands. Minni and Vikki's father was away on a tour, but their mother was home. She also thought that the week had been too long. The children were restless. It was so hot outside that they had to rely on indoor games to pass the time. They had exhausted all the resources of indoor entertainment, had read and re-read all their books, and had even watched two movies a day on the video. More, their mother did not allow. It would be too much of a strain on the eyes. To be fair to her neither did she

force them to read their course books beyond a point. All work and no play does make children dull.

So the problem of how to be fruitfully occupied during the holidays still remained. Picnics were out, as firstly, father was not there and secondly, it was so hot outside.

It was not only Minni and Vikki's family who suffered from boredom; but also the other families in the neighbourhood. Only a handful of them had gone away for the summer.

They all missed Mrs. Richards, who had yet not returned from Bombay where she had gone visiting her son. Minni was sure she would

have been able to think up some ways and means to keep them busy and happy. They were all at a breaking point with frayed nerves, and frequently fought amongst themselves.

The end of a day would usually find tearful eyes, bickerings, broken friendships and threats of 'never-again-going-to-talk-to-you' being exchanged.

One day, Minni watched her mother take back ironed clothes from the washerwoman's eleven-year-old son. He was short, dark and had a running nose which he kept wiping on the sleeve. Minni was disgusted by the sight and fetched him a handkerchief. He took it gleefully but instead of

using it, slipped it inside his pocket as if it was a prized possession. Minni was about to rebuke him when her mother returned with the money to pay him. Minni's mother asked him, "How much do I have to pay?"

The child looked surprised but promptly replied, "I don't know. Mother said you would give me the correct amount."

Minni was amused and mocked, "Why, can't you add it up yourself? Don't you know how to count?"

"No," the poor boy replied meekly.

Minni was shocked. How was it possible that a boy of eleven years did not know simple arithmetic. But that was the brutal truth. Ramu's parents were too poor and ignorant to send him to school. His going to school would

be a waste of hard-earned money and time according to them. Especially when they knew that his future was secure in the profession his father pursued—ironing clothes. You did not require education as much as you did skill and practice. Who was going to make them understand that education never goes waste?

Minni was forced to count her blessings when



she tried to imagine life without school. She knew she was able to read her favourite books because she went to school where she was taught to read and understand the language. Minni pondered. Couldn't anything be done for these deprived children? Then she remembered that in her civics class they had been told that the Government was made of people like her father. After all, her father worked in a government office. So didn't he make the Government? Minni ran to her mother and posed the question to her.

Her mother smiled and made her sit beside her. "Yes, dear, we all are the government. Government means taking care of things, keeping them in order and seeing that proper use is made of the things, avoiding waste. When we all start doing this, there won't be any deprived or poor people in our country."

"Even I? But I am so young. I can't even vote. So what can I do?" asked a bemused Minni.

"Are you too young to eat? To breathe? And if you are young, why do you argue when I ask Vikki to go with you when you



want to visit your friends after dark? Then it is you who says you are grown up enough to go out on your own," her mother remarked.

"Yes, but then what can I do?" a bewildered Minni asked her mother.

"Why, for a change you can help Ramu. Teach him to read and write and a little bit of arithmetic. After all you do help Vikki with his homework sometimes."

"You mean to say that I can become a teacher and Ramu my student?" exclaimed Minni in wonder.

"Yes, why not?"

Minni really felt grown up the next day when Ramu came to her to

study. Her mother had spoken to his parents and convinced them that it would be good for them and their son. Not that they needed much persuasion. It would keep their son out of mischief and he might learn something from the 'big' people.

Ramu came in clean, but patched-up clothes. Minni gave him a pencil and an old notebook which had a few blank pages.

This was how the small school of their making started working. For, the next day Ramu came with his younger sister tagging along who also wanted a notebook and a pencil of her own. Minni's friends who had come to call her to while away their time

stayed back and offered to teach. Soon there were as many teachers as students. By word of mouth, news spread and children of maid servants, *chowkidars*, milk men, drivers, construction labourers, sweepers started pouring in. Parents too contributed by bringing out the old school books meant for the *kabariwala*. Every scrap of blank paper was brought to use. They learnt the value of preser-

vation. Sanju's father worked in a press and lots of paper would be wasted there. He sought the owner's permission and started bringing the waste paper home for the children to use.

In order to teach well, the children would spend the time when their 'students' were not around to make charts to aid their teaching. They would read the lessons themselves to be better prepared for any unexpected question. They

had found these 'poor children' really inquisitive and keen to learn.

This way Minni and her friends not only perfected their own spellings and grammar but also did not find time hanging on their hands any longer. In fact they had succeeded in killing two birds with one stone—the bird of boredom and that of illiteracy amongst poor children, with just one stroke of initiative—that is, by teaching them.



Holiday Reading

Quiz Master Series

1. Literature

By Rabindra Mahajan

2. Wildlife

By Rabindra Mahajan

3. Economics

By Dipavali Debroy

4. Hinduism

By TTR Iyengar

5. Challenge

By TTR Iyengar

6. Media

By Neelaxi Arora

7. History

By Sushmita Dutt

8. Travel

By Vandana Malhotra

Published by Learners Press, New Delhi

Price: Rs.30/- each

A new series for quiz buffs to browse through and master. The subjects cover a wide range—Media, Wildlife, Hinduism, Economics, Travel, History, Literature and one called 'Challenge'. All give multiple choice answers except for the volume on Hinduism which needed it most and which, perhaps, only the erudite can successfully

tackle. An interesting, useful set.

Marar Mouse and Other Stories

Price: Rs.65/-

Published by Children's Book Trust

A collection of five of CBT's animal stories—*Marar Mouse*, *Mother is Mother*, *The Lion's Court*, *Chug Chug Chuggy* and *Four Neighbours*—this hardbound edition with vibrant illustrations is a delight to read aloud and absorb. A treat for the younger age group to feast on.

The Elephant and the Water Tanks

By Shikha Mukerji

Illustrated by Laurent Berset

Price: Rs.12/-

Published by Children's Book Trust

When an elephant wanders into your city and 'lands' on your roof, what would it do for a bath? A picture book with a novel idea.

The Postman

By R.K. Murthi

Illustrated by

B.G. Varma

Price: Rs.12/-

Published by Children's Book Trust

The animals of the jungle need a reliable, intelligent, quick postman. Any takers?

Adventure Stories

By Arup Kumar Dutta

Price: Rs.80/-

Published by Children's Book Trust

Four stories by Arup Kumar Dutta—the much-acclaimed *Kaziranga Trail*, *The Blind Witness*, *Trouble at Kolongijan* and *Smack*—form this combined hardbound volume which targets the 9-14 age group and makes exciting reading.

Sudha Sanjeev

1. The Bones and the Skeletal System

2. The Muscles and the Muscular System

3. The Heart and the Circulatory System

4. **The Womb and the Reproductive System**
 5. **The Hormones and the Endocrine System**
 6. **The Brain and the Nervous System**
 7. **The Lungs and the Respiratory System**
 8. **The Stomach and the Digestive System**
- Published by Learners Press, New Delhi**
Price: Rs.25.00 each

The human body is a marvellous piece of divine engineering with a place and purpose for each and every part. The body is divided into a number of systems that perform different functions and in a healthy body these functions coordinate smoothly.

This series of eight books, author unknown, deal with various body systems. Each book goes into detail about a particular system explaining the component organs and their functions, some disorders of the system, their causes, together with a few observations for the reader to make on his own in the end.

Take, for example, *The Hormones and the Endocrine System*. This book tells the readers about

glands and hormones, where glands are situated, what part of the body they affect and some dysfunctions of glands.

While these books do give basic information, they are wanting in visual appeal. The illustrations and lettering on the covers give them the appearance of textbooks which they are not. The diagrams and pictures within the books are a sorry lot. Take, for instance, the picture on page 28 of *The Hormones and the Endocrine System*. The girls in this picture appear to be suffering from some form of retardation whereas they are all supposed to appear normal. Another example of poor illustration is the one on page 23 of *The Muscles and the Muscular System*; note the background of the picture on page 6 of *The Womb and the Reproductive System*. Such examples abound. When a reader pays Rs.25 for each of these books, he has every right to expect drawings that are not only correct but also drawn in proportion and are attractive.

The excretory system—skin, kidneys—is conspicuous by its absence. And, therefore, this set remains incomplete on this account.

Brain Teasers in English

By Gratian Vas

Price: Rs.80.00

The Sterling Dictionary for Misspellers

By Vijaya Kumar

Price: Rs.45.00

Both published by Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

If mental stimulation is what you are looking for, *Brain Teasers* will help you pick your brains. With its puzzles, anagrams, quizzes, crosswords, it is an absorbing book that will keep you occupied for hours. *Brain Teasers* will not only test your knowledge of English but, in the process, add to it, too.

To cite an example. In 'Likes and Shapes', the reader is asked to give one word that describes the characteristics of a cat, a cloud, something that is spindle-shaped, needle-shaped, and so on. In 'Cry or Call', one has to identify various animal sounds; in 'Containers

and Contents', what do objects like a carafe, a bandbox, hold or were originally intended for; in 'Special Names', identify the names given to a young seal, a female hare, a fox's tail, the tongue of a butterfly, so on and so forth.

A useful buy for the summer holidays.

If spellings are your weak point, *The Sterling Dictionary for Misspellers* will attempt to help you overcome it. This dictionary provides a list of words that are normally misspelt, giving the misspelt and the correct word together for a comparison. It also highlights words where one is most likely to go wrong. At the end of each alphabet is a small quiz to help you abide by the right spellings. If you are in the habit of reaching for a dictionary to check the meaning, spelling, usage and pronunciation of every new word you come across, then this book is not for you.

The Golden Deer and Other Tales from the Jatakas
A Strange Prophecy

and Other Tales from the Jatakas

The Magic Tree and Other Tales

Price: Rs.30.00 each
Equal to a Thousand and Other Tales

Price: Rs.25.00

The Fourth Friend

Price: Rs. 30.00

Legend of the Golden Valley

Price: Rs. 40.00

By Manoj Das

Illustrated by Sisir Dutta

Published by

Chandamama Publications, Madras

With bright, bold illustrations and lettering, the cover of each these books invites the reader to pick them up. The contents do not disappoint either.

There are two volumes of Jataka stories.

"Jatakas", the introduction tells us, "are among the oldest stories in the world", and relate to the various lives of the Buddha.

Some stories are familiar like *The Golden Deer* and *Doomsday in the Forest*.

In the first, a golden deer is willing to sacrifice its life to save those of others in his herd, thus

bringing a change of heart in the king of the land. In the second story, a sleeping rabbit, awakened by the sound of a falling fruit, thinks the earth is cracking up and sets off a near stampede in the forest. The lion's clear thinking saves the day.

The Magic Tree and Other Tales and *Equal to a Thousand and Other Tales* are again collections of stories from the vast repository that India has. Here again there may be some that you know and some that you do not.

Man's vanity, greed, foolishness as also his sagacity and commonsense are represented in these stories. The same qualities and vices are given to animals and stories woven around them. There is a moral in each of the stories but no moralising.

Following a flash flood, Jay, Ramu and Shekhar take refuge on trees. Alone on one tree, Jay finds somebody else climbing out of the waters up the tree. Perched on another tree, Ramu and Shekhar are dismayed to find that Jay's companion is a huge tiger. No, the

tiger is not a maneater. As the story progresses the three boys and the tiger become friends.

Amusing, interesting, *The Fourth Friend* is a short novel set in rural India.

Legend of the Golden Valley is a fantasy. Raju lives in the Golden Valley. One day an earthquake hits the valley and Raju sees a golden statue near an abandoned palace. There is a legend about the statue. It had been made by a former prince of the Golden Valley. Betrayed by his minister,

the prince disappears when his kingdom is attacked and so does the statue after an earthquake.

According to the legend the hidden statue would be revealed one day. That is what Raju sees now. A voice asks him whether he would like to know the secret of breathing life into the statue. Raju's 'yes' leads him to a long adventure where he crosses many lands, meets various people, faces difficulties successfully to bring the statue to life.

A story that is slightly

drawn out and causes attention to flag at times, *Legend of the Golden Valley* has, nonetheless, some interesting ideas.

Minor grammatical mistakes occur at a couple of places in the book.

'The End' after the last line of the story in all but *The Magic Tree and Other Tales* jars. A blurb on the fourth cover of the novels would have been useful.

Sisir Dutta's illustrations are striking and contribute not a little to making these books worth a read.

Bhavana Nair



Dear Children

VISIT

NATIONAL RAIL MUSEUM, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi

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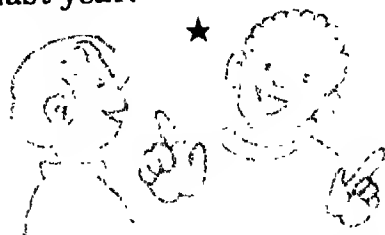
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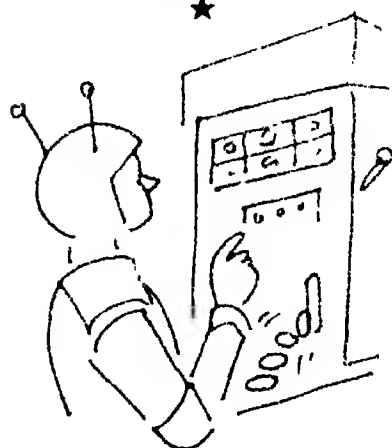
That's a Joke!

Ramesh: "So, you're not going to Nainital this year during the summer vacation?"

Chandran: "No, it's Mussoorie we are not going to this year. It was Nainital we didn't go to last year."



A Martian landed at a fun-fair, just as somebody hit the jack-pot and the coins came flooding out. Turning to the machine, the Martian said, "You shouldn't be out with a cold like that."



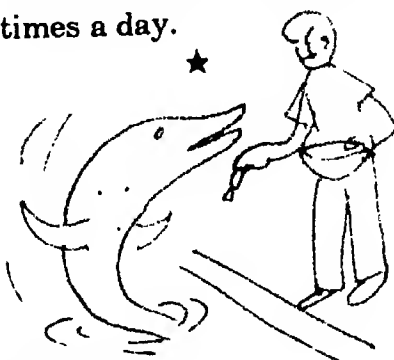
Big man in a theatre to a small boy sitting behind him: "Can you see, boy?"

Boy: "No sir, not at all."

Big man: "Okay, then just watch me and laugh when I do."



Dolphins are so intelligent that within a few weeks of captivity they can train a man to stand on the edge of their pool and throw them fish three times a day.



Science teacher: "Brij, what is the formula for water?"

Brij: "H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O."

Science teacher: "You are not in the nursery, you know."

Brij: "But, Teacher, you did teach us that it was H to O."



Why do cows in India have bells round their necks?

Because their horns don't work.



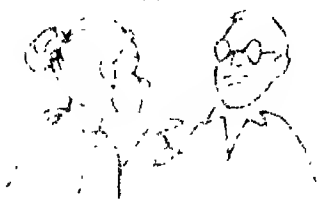
Mother to son: "Hurry up, you'll be late for school."

Son: "Don't want to go."

Mother: "But you must go."

Son: "Mother, the teachers hate me, and the kids despise me, so why should I go?"

Mother: "Because you are forty-two years old, and you're the headmaster."



An alien landed in an Indian village and came upon a woman carrying a transistor.

Shocked, the alien asked her, "Why do you carry your child around without any clothes?"



New boy in school: "Is this school haunted?"

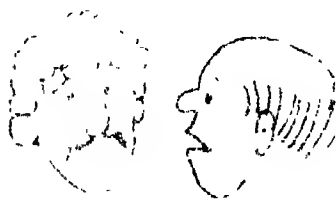
Shyam: "No, why?"

New boy: "I keep hearing people talk about the school spirit here."



Neha: "It's raining cats and dogs."

Mother: "I know, I just stepped into a poodle."



TV star: "Have you seen me on television?"

Friend: "Yes, on and off."

TV star: "How did you like me?"

Friend: "Off."



What happened to the girl who swallowed a spoon?

She couldn't stir.



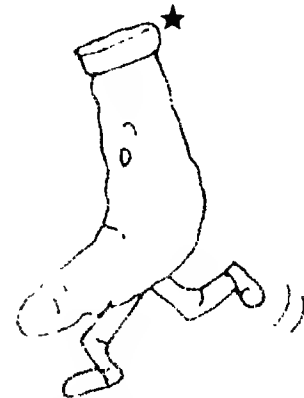
What do historians talk about when they meet?

Old times.



What are the best kind of stockings for cricketers to wear?

Stockings with runs in them!



Where do vampires keep their money?

In blood banks.



What happened when the dwarf applied for a job in the circus?

He was put on the 'short'-list.



PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the *Children's World* Pen-friends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have pen-friends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

8051
Kanika Sharma (10)
268-A, Arjun Nagar
Safdarjang Enclave
New Delhi 110029, India
Writing, making friends
Any country

8052
Smita Gupta (13)
20/14, Shakti Nagar
New Delhi 110007, India
Reading, pen-friends
Any country

8053
Sagarika Y.J. (15)
d/o Y.J. Janardhan
Janardhan Naidu House
Kote-Chickmagalur
Karnataka, India
Pen-friendship, singing
Any country

8054
N. Varsha (13)
15 A/19 W.E.A.
Karol Bagh
New Delhi 110005, India
Reading, badminton
Any country

8055
Devesha T. Dhanraj (10)
131/2, RT
Prakashamnagar
Begumpet
Hyderabad 500016
Andhra Pradesh, India
Reading, drawing
Canada, Australia

8056
Love (11)
E-39/9 A.S. Ramesh
Nagar
New Delhi 110015, India

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB ENRO'MENT FORM

Member No..... (To be filled by office) Issue dated.....

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Hobbies:

Pen-friends wanted in (Country).....

*Age limit: 16 years

Signature

GIRLS

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Painting, cricket
U.S.A. | Udaynagar
Gandhidham (Kutch)
Gujarat 370203, India | Himachal Pradesh, India
Music, making friends
India, U.S.A. |
| 8057
Sriparna Ghosh (10)
E-798 Chittaranjan Park
New Delhi 110019
Drawing, reading
Any country | Dancing, reading
Any country | 8068
Hajira Ambreen (14)
No. P-95, III Cross
Nagappa Block
Bangalore 560021
Karnataka, India
Painting, reading
U.S.A., India |
| 8058
Priyanka Sharma (14)
d/o Mr. R.K. Sharma
1-A/186 N.I.T.
Faridabad 121001
Haryana, India
Painting, dancing
U.S.A., Switzerland | 8063
Sourabhi V. (11)
d/o M.P. Vikram
Gangajala Estate
Nanpipura P.O.
Mudigere T.G.
Chickmagalore
Karnataka, India
Drawing, stamps
Any country | 8069
Nidhi Gambhir (13)
B-22 Vishal Enclave
New Delhi 110027, India
Pen-friends, music
Any country |
| 8059
Rashmi Saponi (14)
J-47, New Palam Vihar
Gurgaon
Haryana 122017, India
Dance, pen-friendship
Any country | 8064
Sadhna Bhaskar (15)
Qr. 10/B, Street 18
Sector 7, Durg (Dist) Bhilai
Madhya Pradesh 490006
India
Music, reading
Any country | 8070
Archana Beek (14)
H.No. C-29 HMT Colony
Pinjore 134101
Dist. Panchkula, India
Pen-friendship, painting
Any country |
| 8060
Radhika Gupta (12)
c/o Mr. Yogesh Gupta
High Commission of India
Victoria Island
Lagos, Nigeria
Reading, dramatics
Any country | 8065
P. Harita (11)
12/4, CPWD Old Quarters
Besant Nagar
Madras 600090
Tamil Nadu, India
Painting, music
China, Japan | 8071
Latika Hary (14)
3085, Sector A/Pocket B
Vasant Kunj
New Delhi 110070
India
Stamps, music
Any country |
| 8061
Indu Gopalakrishnan (10)
Sreevalsam, A.P.O. Road
Malappuram 676505
Kerala, India
Stamps, reading
U.S.A, Japan | 8066
Neerja (10)
1/110, Old Rajinder Nagar
New Delhi 110060, India
Singing, painting
U.S.A., Japan | 8072
H.V. Naidele (14)
d/o H.K. Vishwanath
Hallehalli
B. Hosahalli Post
Hudigore Taluk
Chickmagalore Dist.
Karnataka, India
Pen-friends, stamps
Japan, Singapore |
| 8062
Shilpi R. Dixit (13)
c/o R.K. Dixit
D-327, IFFCO | 8067
Savita Sharma (15)
Main Building
New Lands Estate
Shimla 171001 | |

GIRLS

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>8073
S. Rashmi (12)
c/o Gunda Bhatta
243, 5th Main
III Block
Thyagarajanagar
Bull Temple Road
Extreme End
Bangalore 560028
Karnataka, India
Dancing, singing
Australia, Japan</p> <p>8074
S. Chitra (15)
d/o B.V. Shankar
24, 9th A
Cross Park Area
Wilson Garden
Bangalore 560027
Karnataka, India
Dancing, singing
U.S.A., Switzerland</p> <p>8075
Isha Majitha (13)
2/8 Jubilee Lines
Army Officers Enclave
Hastings
Calcutta 700022
West Bengal, India
Reading, dancing
Any country</p> <p>8076
Hadiel Ahmed Faris (16)
11 Haret El-Agana
Mohammad Farid Street
Abdin, Cairo
Egypt
Music, pen-friends
Any country</p> <p>8077
Jyoti Rai (11)
c/o Mr. C.P. Malla
Dewsi Dara</p> | <p>P.O. Mirik 734214
Darjeeling Dist.
India
Pen-friends, stamps
India, Japan</p> <p>8078
Lincy Gopinath (14)
Site III/39 Vikaspuri
New Delhi 110018
India
Painting, books
U.S.A., Switzerland</p> <p>8079
V.T. Sunitha (13)
Thayil Thodi House
Thamara Kuzhi
Malappuram 676505
Kerala, India
Painting, dancing
Any country</p> <p>8080
Bimla Gurung (15)
c/o Tej Bahadur
P.B. No. 193
Indian Embassy
Thimphu, Bhutan
Stamps, collecting cards
Any country</p> <p>8081
Swati Chawla (11)
House No. 184
Pocket A-3, Sector-8
Rohini
Delhi 110084
India, U.S.A.</p> <p>8082
Priti Sharma (13)
BU-195, Pitampura
Delhi 110034
India
Reading, stamps
Any country</p> | <p>8083
Swagatika Nanda (13)
c/o Dr. B.K. Nanda
'Nanda Niwas'
K.M. Road, Jharsuguda
Orissa, India
Gardening, music
India, New Zealand</p> <p>8084
Rajita Shenoy R. (13)
'Ramnivas' House No.114
Gandhi Nagar
Trivandrum 695014
Kerala, India
Pen-friends, painting
Any country</p> <p>8085
Neha Sood (12)
53/D Pocket (F)
G.T.B. Enclave
Dilshad Garden
Delhi 110093, India
Dancing, swimming
Any country</p> <p>8086
Eesha Sharma (11)
B-1/1510 Vasant Kunj
New Delhi 110070, India
Painting, reading
Switzerland</p> <p>8087
Deepika (14)
E-55 Naraina Vihar
New Delhi 110058, India
Music, reading
India</p> <p>8088
Sreechi C. Nair (10)
H.No. 656, Sector 23
N.I.T. Faridabad
Haryana 121005, India
Music, dancing
India</p> |
|---|---|---|

BOYS

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>8089
D.Ravi Kiran (15)
s/o Surya Narayana
Prodduvaka Via
Korukallu, Krishna Dist.
Andhra Pradesh, India
Making friends
India, U.S.A.</p> | <p>8094
Thasleem Ahmed (15)
Roll No. 98, Crescent
School
Vandalur, Madras 600048
Tamil Nadu, India
Singing, dancing
Any country</p> | <p>8099
Abhishek Bakshi (10)
U-11, Green Park
New Delhi 110016
India
Stamps, cartoons
Japan, U.S.A.</p> |
| <p>8090
Deepak Singh (15)
Class IX
Kendriya Vidyalaya No.2
Inf. Line, Jamnagar
Gujarat, India
Collecting cricket
photographs
Any country</p> | <p>8095
Amandeep Singh Gill (10)
2/362, S.P. Marg
Officers' Enclave
New Delhi 110021
Stamps, coins
Other than India</p> | <p>8100
Gurunath A. Parab (16)
c/o Naggama A. Naik
Vivek Nagar, Kumta
Dist. Karwar
Karnataka 581343
Collecting currencies,
computers
Any country</p> |
| <p>8091
Amit Ashokan (15)
Room No. 13, 'A' Wing
Shree Shivdarsan Coop.
Society
Kopar Road
Dombivili (W) 421202
Thane (Dist)
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, coins
Any country</p> | <p>8096
Amit Anand (16)
Block 'B', Rajasthan Hostel
c/o Birla Higher
Secondary School
Pilani, Rajasthan 333031
India
Computers, listening to
old melodies
Any country</p> | <p>8101
Baburaj (16)
Patel Colony
Sambra, Belgaum
Karnataka 591124
India
Drawing, riding
Any country</p> |
| <p>8092
Charit Gaur (11)
Sharad Hostel
Room No. 4,
I.A.R.I., New Delhi 110012
Painting, music
Any country</p> | <p>8097
Vikram Narayan (11)
C-2, Block 3
Star Park Apartments
Convent Road
Elamkulam
Ernakulam 682019
Kerala, India
Reading, studying
Egypt, Spain</p> | <p>8102
M. Victor (12)
The Ramakrishna Mission
Vidyapeeth
P.O. Vidyapeeth
Deoghar 814112
Bihar, India
Computer, music
Any country</p> |
| <p>8093
Ankit Rastogi (14)
91, Manak Vihar
Delhi 110092
India
Stamps, cricket
Any country</p> | <p>8098
Alok Bhandari (16)
E-23, Gokhale Marg
C-Scheme, Jaipur
Rajasthan, India
Billiards, horse riding
Any country</p> | <p>8103
Jimmy Angom (12)
Ramakrishna Mission
Vidyapith
P.O. Vidyapith
Deoghar 814112
Bihar, India
Reading, pen-friends
U.S.A., India</p> |

BOYS

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>8104
Abhijeet Kumar (15)
Qr. No. 34/L 4,
Cross Road No. 16
Agrico
Jamshedpur 831009
Bihar, India
Music, cricket
U.S.A., Germany</p> | <p>Photography, travelling
Any country</p> | <p>8114
Pratap Mudappa (13)
Mavaji House
Post Mandekolu
Via Jalsoor, Sullia
Karnataka, India
Stamps, dancing
Any country</p> |
| <p>8105
Shuvendu Banerjee (15)
P.O. Gondalpara
Satghat
Chandennagore 712137
West Bengal, India
Painting
Japan, U.S.A.</p> | <p>8109
Prakash Mahato (13)
c/o Subhash Mahato
Belguna (Opp. Police Line
Near Chandmari)
Purulia 723101
West Bengal, India
Collecting photos, reading
Any country</p> | <p>8115
Ankur Jain (11)
39-B, Ahinsa Vihar
Sector IX
27/1 Rohini
Delhi 110085, India
Skating, video games
Any country</p> |
| <p>8106
Vimal L. Lakhani (16)
Devbagh
Yogeshwar Society-I
Plot No. 5,6,7, Bhavnagar
Gujarat, India
Stamps & coins, dancing
Any country</p> | <p>8110
Manchit Kalani (8)
'Kalani Villa'
Ground Floor
D-38 Rajouri Garden
New Delhi 110027
Gardening, reading
India</p> | <p>8116
Mithun Sasi (15)
Roll No. 2888
Nehru House
Sainik School P.O.,
Kazhakootom
Trivandrum 695585
Kerala, India
Dancing, stamps
Any country</p> |
| <p>8107
Rahul Roy (13)
Vivekananda Sadan
P.O. Vivekananda Nagar
R.K. Vidyapith
Dist. Purulia 723147
West Bengal, India
Reading, gardening
Any country</p> | <p>8111
Amir Akhtar (15)
c/o Hamdard Public School
Talimabad, Sangam Vihar
New Delhi 110062, India
Gardening, cricket
Nepal, Switzerland</p> | <p>8117
Gaurav Maleri (16)
68/F Kitchlu Nagar
Ludhiana 141001
Punjab, India
Reading, writing
Any country</p> |
| <p>8108
Sumit Sultania (14)
s/o Lakshmi Narayan
Sultania
Hind Motor and Cycle
Store
Barakar Road
Purulia 723101
West Bengal, India</p> | <p>8112
John Francis (14)
'Fair Look'
Kizakkumbattukhra
East Fort, Trichur 5
Kerala, India
Stamps & currency
Any country</p> | <p>8118
K. Kartheek Reddy (14)
s/o K. Kailashnath Reddy
c/o K.K. Industries
Yadiki 515408
Andhra Pradesh
India
Coins, writing letters
U.S.A., Russian
Federation</p> |
| <p>8113
Sarfaraz Nawaz (15)
"Shrikant Niwas"
Behind Janta High School
Balekundri (KH)
Karnataka 591103, India
Making friends, debating
Any country</p> | | |

BOYS

8119
Pema Dorjee (14)
VKU Balijan
Via Bandardeva
Dist. Papumpare 791123
Arunachal Pradesh
India
Reading, letterwriting
Any country

8120
Furqaan Ahmed (15)
c/o The Principal
Hamdard Public School
Talimabad, Sangam Vihar
New Delhi 110062, India
Reading, singing
Any country

8121
Santosh Kumar (14)
Qr. No. I/37
HAL Township
Dist. Koraput
Sunabeda 763002
Orissa, India
Music, reading
Singapore, U.S.A.

8122
Sunil Kumar (9)
Qr. No. I/37
HAL Township
Dist. Koraput
Sunabeda 763002
Orissa, India
Reading, stamps &
currency
Japan

8123
Himanshu Jain (10)
76 State Bank Colony
Near Rana Pratap Bagh
G.T. Karnal Road
Delhi 110033, India

Football, cricket
U.S.A., U.K.

8124
Chaitharodaya A.K. (14)
s/o A.R. Kollappa Gowda
Sangmeshwarpet Post
Chickmagalore Dist.
Karnataka, India
Playing, style-writing
U.S.A., India

8125
Nitin Kumar (16)
286 Laxmi House
Begum Bagh
Meerut 250001, U.P.
India
Music, kite flying
U.S.A., Japan

8126
Ramesh H. (15)
Patel Colony
(Near Post Office)
Sambra, Belgaum 591124
Karnataka, India
Making friends, reading
Any country

8127
Mathan Anand K. (14)
c/o K.S. Anand
HIG 294, 15 'A'
Cross Road, New Town
Yelahanka
Bangalore 560064
Karnataka, India
Stamps, dance
U.S.A., Japan

8128
Vikas Aggarwal (16)
126-Gurdev Nagar
Ludhiana, Punjab, India
Cricket, music
India, France

8129
Sumit Sarogi (13)
2-107 Siddhartha Apts.
Pitampura
Delhi 110034, India
Pen-friends, music
Any country

8130
K. Sunil Kumar (14)
s/o K. Somi Reddy
Sanjeeva Nagar
2nd Road, Tadipatir
Anantapur (Dist)
Andhra Pradesh, India
Stamps & currency,
cricket
Any country

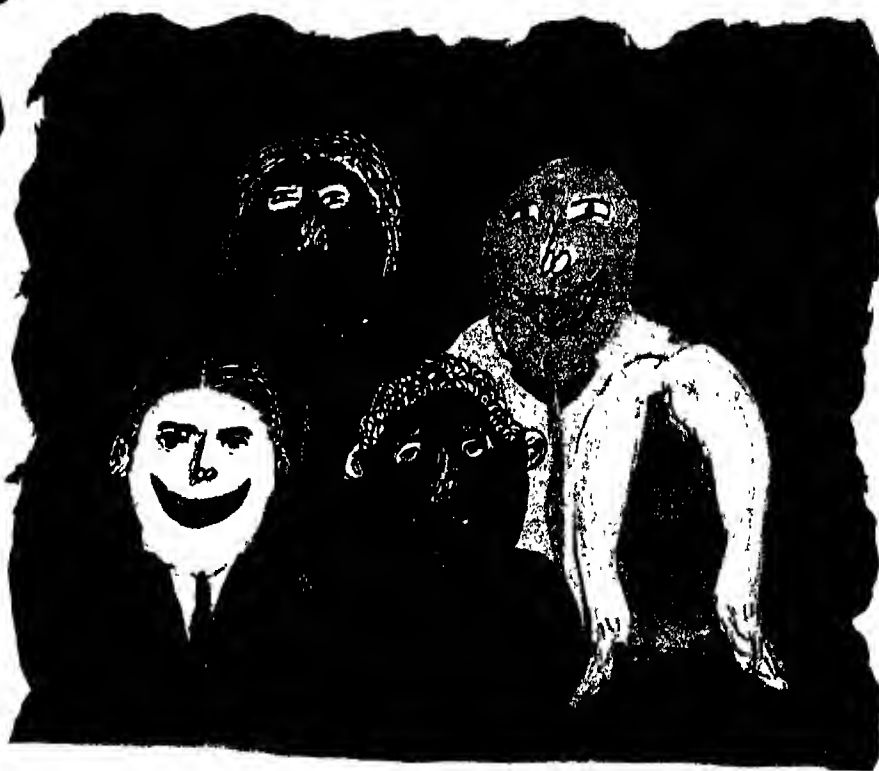
8131
Lawrence Kent (10)
H.No. 64, Quitula
Casa-de-Kent
Aldona, Bardes, Goa
India
Stamps, pets
Any country

8132
Akhil Gupta (12)
B-52 Gharonda Apts.
RBI Society
Shreshtha Vihar
Delhi 110092, India
Playing, reading
Any country

8133
Kalingsiram (14)
R.K.M. School
Tirap Dist., Via Deomali
Narottam Nagar P.O.
Arunachal Pradesh
India
Taekwondo, body building
Any country

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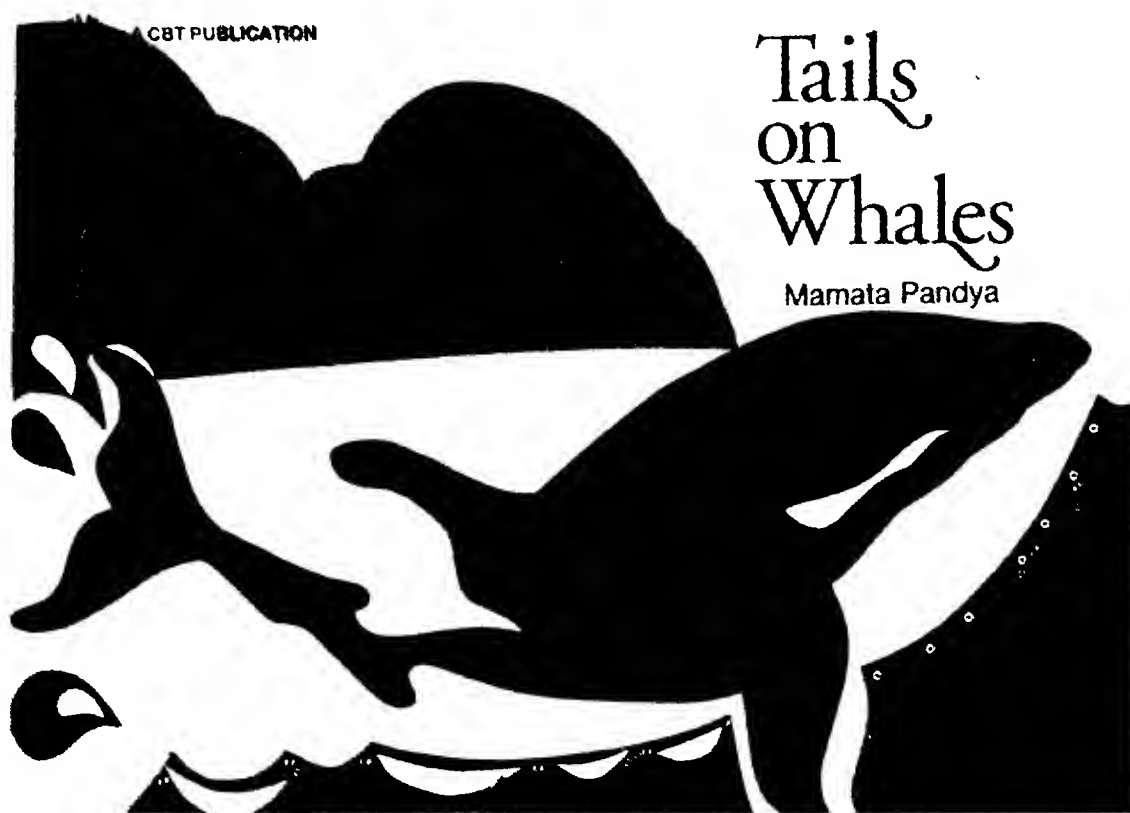
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WILDLIFE WORLD



CHILDREN'S WORLD

INSIDE



JUNE 1996
Vol. XXIX
No. 3



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O.P. Bhagat

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T.K. Janaky

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Report

VT

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Dear Editor...

In a recent issue of *Children's World* the readers were shown pictures of two children who were given prizes for their excellently written poems by the Vice-President of India. I would like to congratulate these outstanding winners. I request you to tell the readers of *Children's World* about this contest of poem writing whenever it is being held so that we can also participate in it. If we are living in Delhi and yet are not able to participate in such morale-boosting contests, we'll never be able to find the hidden talents in ourselves. I would also like to thank you and the staff and contributors of *Children's World*, especially Thangamani, for this wonderful and knowledge-increasing magazine full of

...Dear Readers,

"What is it that makes life possible on Earth?" asks Ms Mamata Pandya, in this World Environment Day exclusive package she has prepared on behalf of the Centre for Environment Education (Ahmedabad) for *Children's World*...and points out that "Earth is not our home alone. It is a home we share with millions of trillions of other living organisms".

It is increasingly becoming clear to us that if Mother Earth is still able to sustain life in spite of all Man's raptorial efforts to snatch from her whatever he can for his own benefit—then it is largely thanks to those "millions of trillions of other living

organisms" who are somewhat maintaining Earth's balance.

Thank you so much.

Kanupriya, New Delhi

*

Reader Kanupriya obviously missed the August, September and October issues last year in which the SICC Rules were printed on cover III. Watch out for them this year in these issues.

Editor

I am a regular reader of your esteemed magazine. I have many a time wished to send stories, jokes, riddles etc. but have always failed to do so for some reason or the other. However, this time, on reading your invitation for the November special issue and realizing that I have time, I eagerly sat down to write all that I could for one of my favourite magazines.

I would like you to be aware of my fondness for this great magazine of yours. Not only is it informative, interesting and entertaining, but also very helpful. In my school, I have many a time given short speeches about the celebration of different festivals with the help of your special feature on 'Festivals'. I am greatly thrilled to be a reader of your magazine.

The only complaint I have about your magazine is that earlier it used to be thick but now it is very thin. Why is it so? This magazine comes in the beginning of the month and is read quickly in about 3-4 days or perhaps a week. Please try and put more stories in it (particularly mysteries). Rest all is great.

Bhavana Dulani,

New Delhi

organisms" who are somewhat maintaining Earth's balance.

When and how are we finally going to wake up to the fact that we have to start giving back to Earth what we have continued to rob her of?

Many of you, readers of *Children's World*, we believe are already doing their own little bit in their immediate 'environment'. Since our June 1992 issue we have, in collaboration with the CEE, covered several aspects of conservation of the environment, not to speak of the monthly feature from the CEE that reveals some facts about plant life, a bird, an animal or a sanctuary... With so much theoretical knowledge garnered over the last five

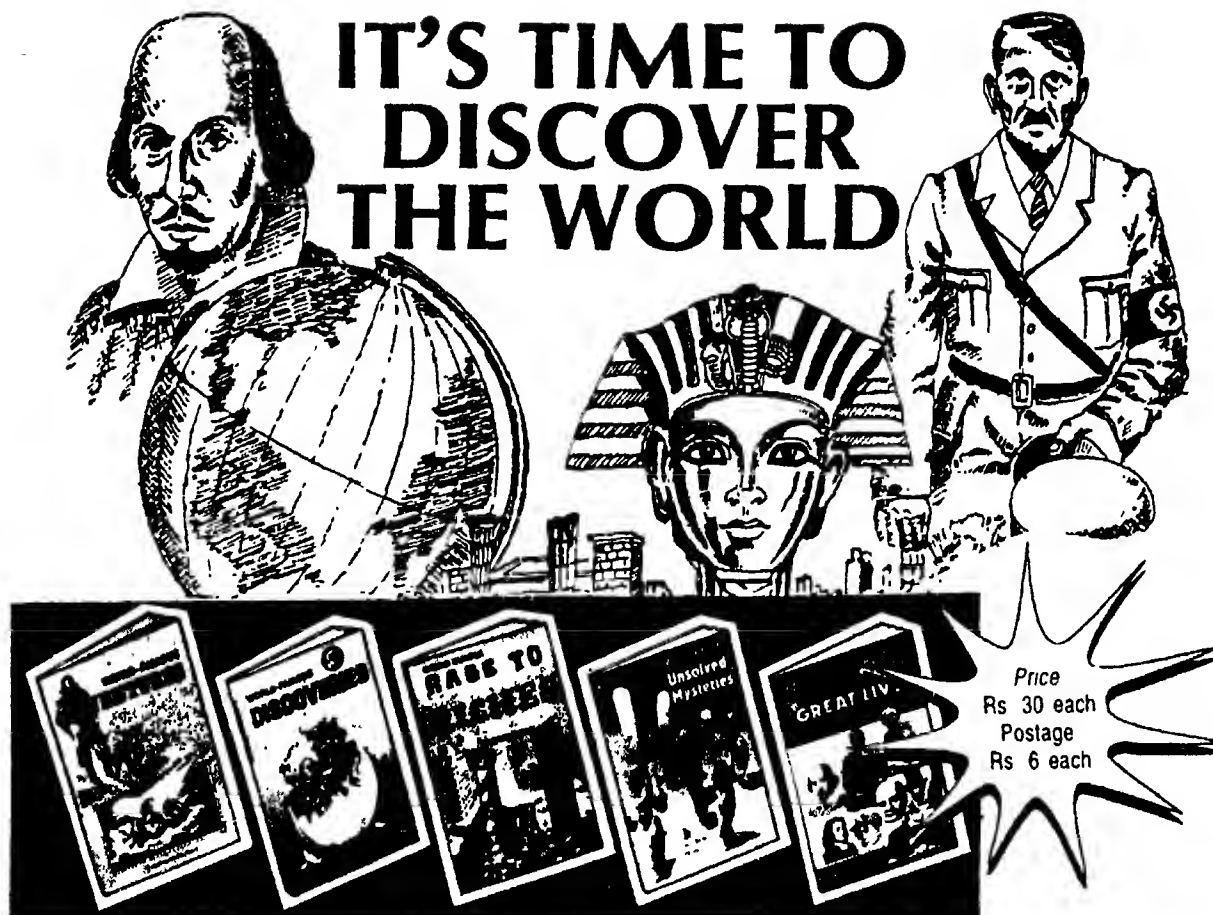
years or so, it is not difficult to imagine that many of our readers have not just become environmentally 'aware' but are turning into conservationists of the finest order.

We look forward to hearing of your experiences in conservation—your encounters with environment preservation. Maybe for some of you, it will be the stuff your stories and poems for the November Your Pages issue will be made of.

Maybe some of the others would like to write to us about what it is that they are doing in their home area or in school, to convince Mother Earth that in the hands of the future generation 'she' is safe!

Happy reading and caring for the Environment...

Editor



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Dear sneezes and sneezers,

Even now, I don't know how it happened but it happened. And it wasn't a dream or anything because my nose is red and a bit swollen. I think so's my mother's and so is Raghu's mother's and so are the noses of about a few hundred people living in the neighbourhood. A few hundred red noses, a bit swollen. Oh yes, and a lot of sneezes—lots more than a few hundred. Maybe thirty or thirty-five sneezes—all statistics from my brother—per person if you can work out an average for sneezes. I mean, it's all a question of

some people sneezing more and others much less—I was told the gentleman next door managed seventy-eight sneezes in about a minute and a half while the postman apparently sneezed twenty-three sneezes per minute for six hours.

Also they—the sneezes—were different kinds of sneezes. There were loud, explosive ones and there were soft as dew ones—the strangest was the lady's, three houses up the road, whose sneeze went phat!! and



was followed by a series of whispering sounds as if her nose was remembering the multiplication tables. And then there was the vegetable vendor who... but I'm going too fast. You don't even know what happened. Well, here's what happened.

Now mind! I knew the entire story only after it was all over and we were all going round with red noses, a bit swollen and only Raghu and my brother had regular face coloured noses and if you are wondering how that happened, then... Oops! There I go again.

Okay, okay, let me take another breath and start again. Well, what happened was, there were, once, a lot of cats. No, that's wrong—not once. Actually, it was last week. Yes. Last week there were a lot of cats suddenly. Suddenly in our neighbourhood. They seemed to come from nowhere and there were lots of them. Maybe, they were on a school excursion or something but anyway, there were really a lot of them. And, while I like cats, these were not the kind I liked. They were not like Lini—our own cat. They were more like dacoits. They sneaked in and drank the milk and



lay under sofas and crept around our bicycles and made a bed under cars. The last activity caused a lot of problems because people would start their cars and move about an inch and all the cats beneath the car would suddenly rush out like a shooting star and cry and moan hideously as if they had been massly murdered.

Nobody quite knew what to do. Everybody tried everything they could. Some people shooed

and shooed, others barked like dogs, there were some who kept their windows and doors shut all the time even though they baked inside. Others phoned the police, the fire brigade, the electricity board (I think they did this out of habit) and the municipality office. But nobody helped. The cats just went on living their catty lives and made it more and more difficult for us to live our non-catty lives.

We found cats on the

window sill, we tripped over them at doorways, they glared at us from beneath hedges, they nuzzled against our bicycle wheels and they shot out from under cars. Cats! Cats! CATS!

So there we were living with and in spite of cats when... Oh no! My nose is itching again; there's a sneeze coming—Yes. Yes. Oh, my goodness—I can't write.

ACHOOO!

*Yours
Perky*



Fateful Decision

Smitha (16)

*One fateful decision,
A single final order,
And so much is gained or lost,
As an aftermath of rashness.
One fateful decision,
And dreams and hopes lay shattered,
All ambitions lay scattered,
The future flung into the dark.
One fateful decision,
And stars are reached overnight,
Wealth and health come in plenty,
And all is well—pink and rosy.
It is incredible when thought of
What one fateful decision alone,
Can do or undo, give or take,
Make or break a destiny.*

Illustrations: Beejee



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NOVEMBER 1996 YOUR PAGES Special Issue

It is that time of the year again when
exams are but a bad dream
the new academic session has begun
new books make lessons interesting—
at least for a while
summer holidays loom large...

Children's World invites entries for its
November Your Pages...

So if you are below 18 years of age, send in stories,
anecdotes, memoirs, jokes, poems, riddles, quizzes,
anything and everything that will make the
November 1996 **Your Pages** a special issue.

Address all entries to

Editor

Children's World

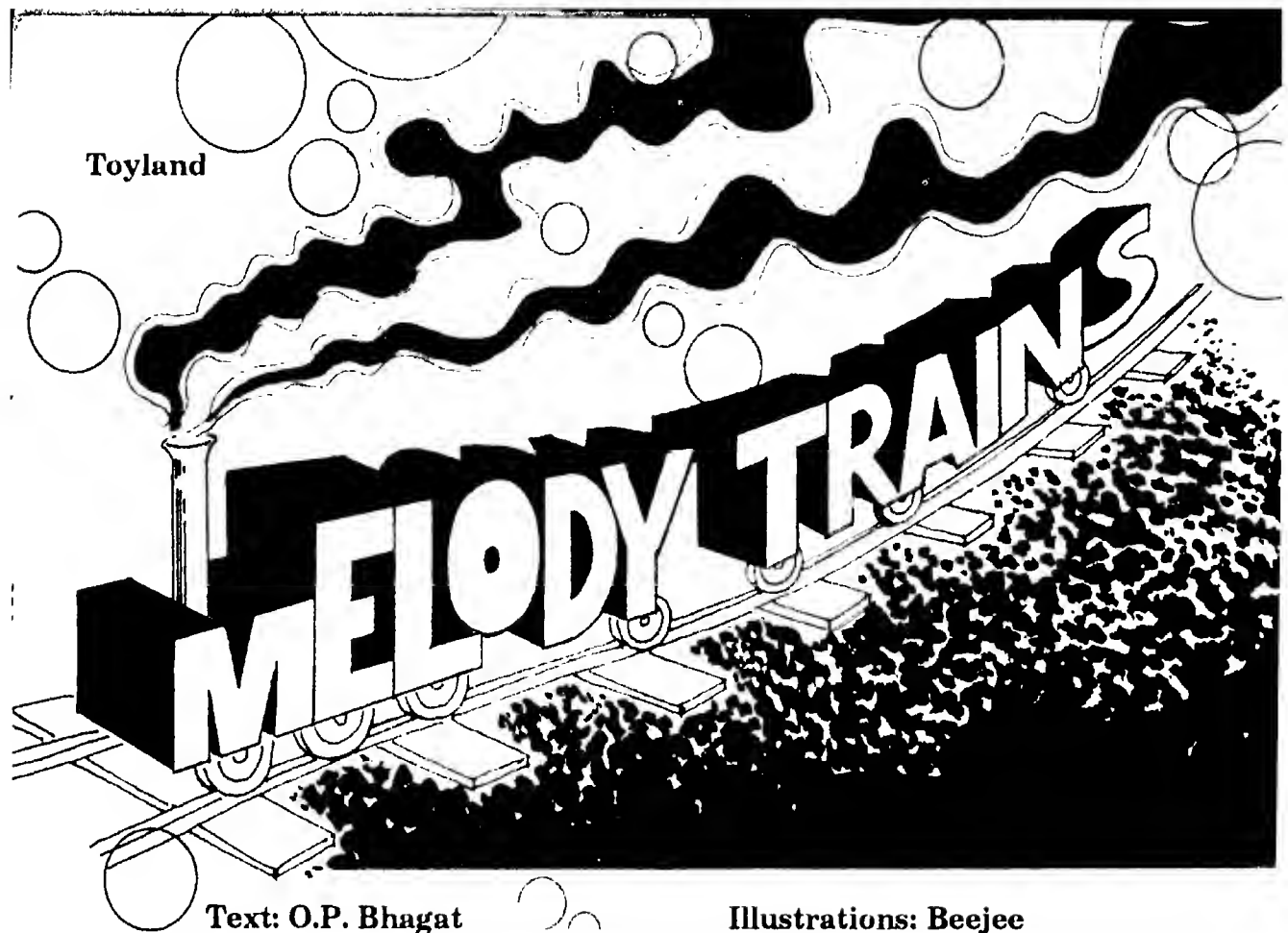
Nehru House

4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg

New Delhi 110002

Last date: July 31, 1996

***All entries must have the contributor's full name,
age, class and the name of the school.***



Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

TOYS ARE of many kinds. But they can be divided into two types: toys that move and toys that don't.

Both these types have always been there. The oldest toys in India have been found in the ruins of Mohenjo-daro. They are made of clay or baked clay.

Among these toys are bulls that move their heads, and birds that move on wheels. Such toys have been found in the remains of the past in some other lands too.

Interestingly, toys like these are made to this day. Some are made of

clay, and some others of wood or plastic.

Mostly they are animals. But there are dancing dolls as well—standing dolls that, in a puff of wind or when touched with a hand, move their necks and seem to be dancing.

Puppets are also toys. They move better and can enact a whole story. But they have to be pulled by means of strings behind the curtain.

Who comes there? It is a seller of clay drum-carts. As he walks down the road by the row of houses, a little cart trails behind him. It is made up of a

bowl of a drum, mounted on clay wheels. As the cart moves, two sticks strike the drum and produce a merry sound.

It seems novel, but is no new invention. Indian children have played with such carts and other toys for generations.

But that plastic duck over there is not so old. It stands on webbed feet. As you press it down, it flaps its wings and lays a plastic egg. Press it down again, and it lays another egg.

Somewhat like the duck is that plastic frog. It leaps into the air when, with the pressure of your

hand, you try to keep it down.

All these toys seem like fun. But they are nothing when compared to the little racing cars and trains and whirring little aeroplanes and helicopters.

These and many other toys are the gift of the machine age. When new trucks and trolleys were made, their models of tin were made for children to play with.

Then, with the coming of motorcars and buses, followed toy cars and buses. Also toy locomotives and trains.

They were not pulled or pushed by hand. They got all the force they needed from a spring and cogged wheels.

This brought about a revolution in the world of toys just as machines had done in the world of men.

Ask your grandpa to tell you the story of the toys in his days. It is as thrilling as any fairy or magic tale.

Actually, these toys came on the scene before he had been born. That is, about 100 years ago.

Those were the days of the British Raj. India got a lot of these new toys from England. Many more came from Germany, Japan and some other countries.



Plastic was there. But it was used, as was rubber, more for making dolls and toy birds and animals. Tin was the material used for making cars, trains and other such toys.

Among the toys with wheels, the train had its own charm. And it attracted old and young alike.

It went round and round on a circular track. Or the track was long, with a signal or a tunnel on the way. Or it was even longer and was spread over the floor as a drawing-room novelty.

Later came trains that made tinkling or more tuneful music as they sped.

By the way, the small trains in children's parks or chugging up to hill stations like Darjeeling are also called toy trains.

It was in those days that children got small bicycles and cars that could be driven (not with the help of engines but pedals and chain) like real cars.

If there was a toy motorcar, there was a toy motorbike too. With a rider on it, the two-wheeler went zooming ahead.

There were some more curious toys—a cowboy

astride a horse, with his lasso going in circles over his head, acrobats swinging on a trapeze, a merry-go-round that moved in dizzy whirls.

All these toys are still there. Many more have been added to them. But in those days they were wonderful little things. As they were beyond the means of most children in India, they were all the more looked at with wonder.

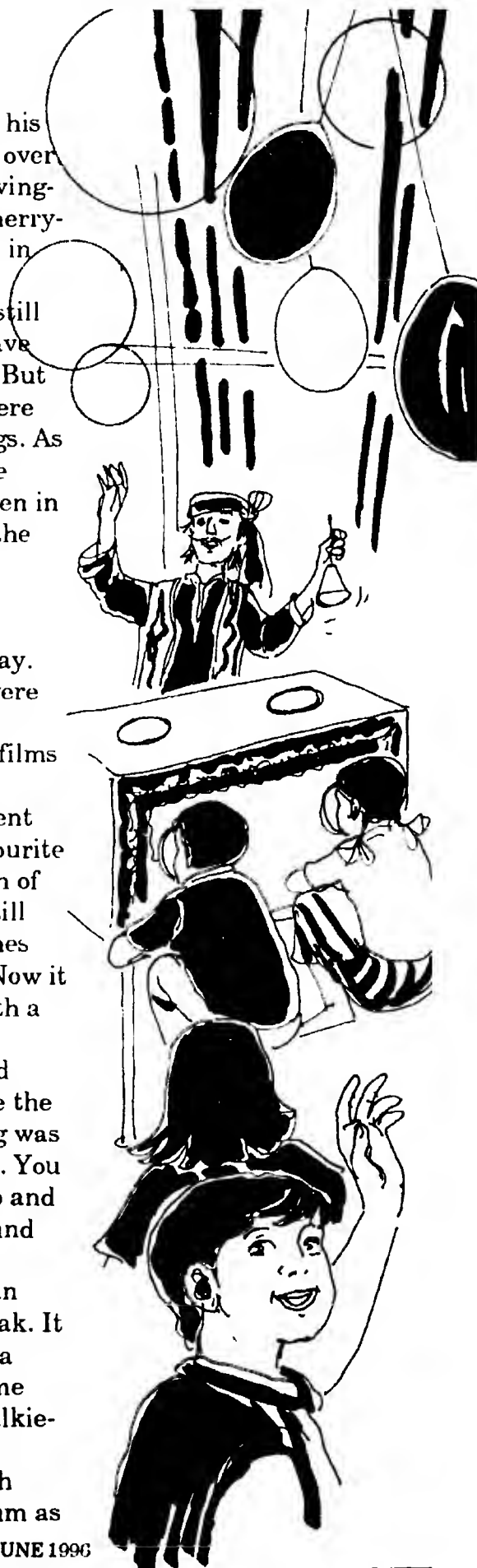
Cinema was then coming up in a big way. For children, there were small projectors with which they screened films in their rooms.

The gramophone lent the peep-show, a favourite with children, a touch of the talkie. The box still draws kids in city lanes and at village fairs. Now it has been updated with a tape-recorder.

The spring changed even a simple toy like the top. No piece of string was now needed to spin it. You had just to wind it up and release it. It went round and round.

A doll did more than blink its eyes or squeak. It could now dance like a ballerina. In time came the hula hoop and walkie-talkie dolls.

A bunny could clash cymbals or beat a drum as



it moved. A bear could fill a glass from a bottle and put it to its mouth.

Toy soldiers had long been there. The two world wars gave the children new and more war toys. There were soldiers that moved their guns up and down as if they were taking aim to fire.

Toy aeroplanes, which had been like monoplanes, now looked like war-planes. Helicopters with whirling rotors were also made. And toy hovercraft.

Some children, for fun or as a hobby, made cardboard models of such craft at home. They still do.

Then there were toy battle tanks that emitted

sparks as they went into action. Also toy Red Cross vans.

Toy motorboats, with a wick for heating, were already there. They steamed around in a basin full of water. Now toy warships and submarines came into the market.

For children interested in engineering, there was Meccano—a set of toy engineering parts that can be built up into various mechanical models.

New engineering and electronic tool kits have been made since. And battery-operated and electronic toys. Also robots and video games.

In fact, the variety of toys today is mind-

boggling.

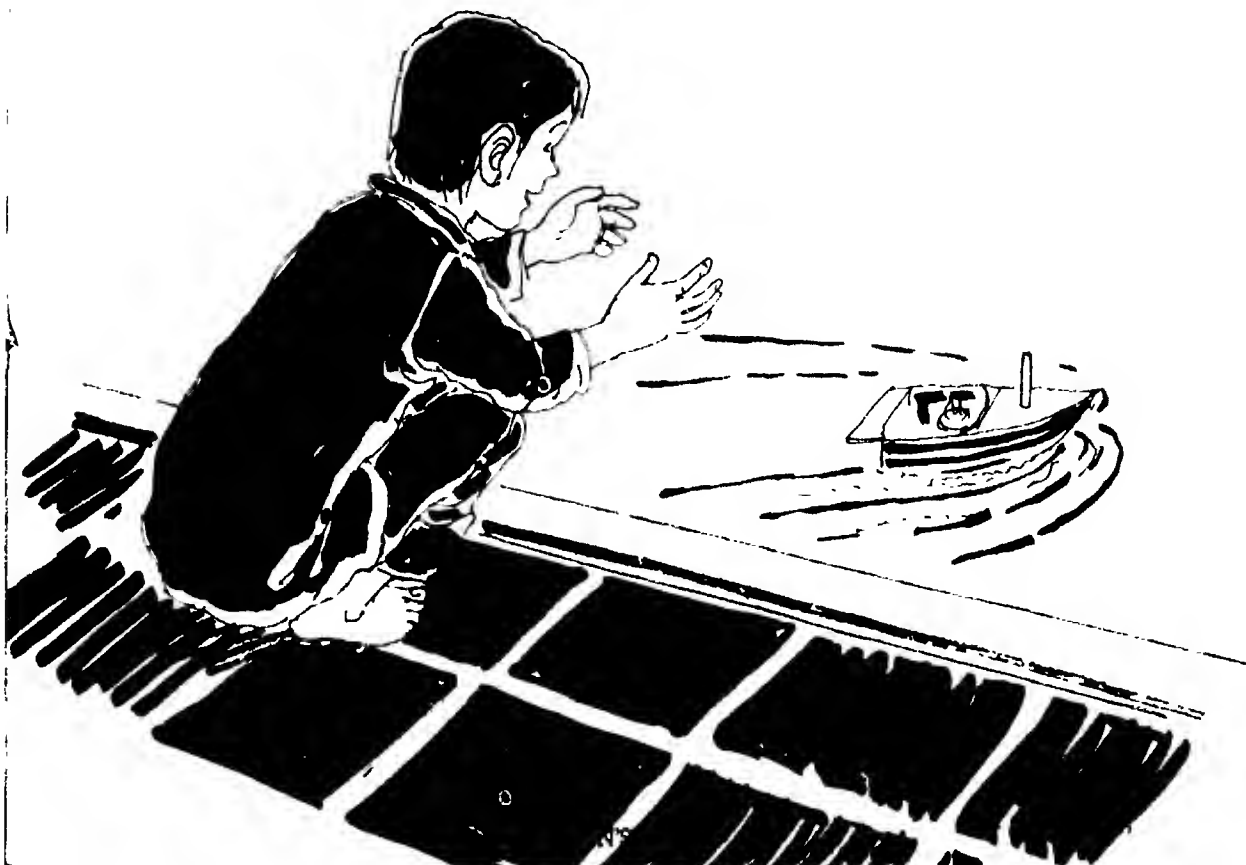
To a great extent, plastic has taken the place of tin and rubber as a toy material. This is because plastic can be given any cute colour. It can also be moulded in any way.

Though the new toys fascinate many, yet some of the old, very old, toys are still bought and played with. The ball and the rattle, for example.

Also the doll. It continues to be every girl's favourite. And the teddy is a favourite with both boys and girls.

Lake Tennyson's *Brook*, the doll could say:

*For toys may come and
toys may go,
But I go on for ever.*

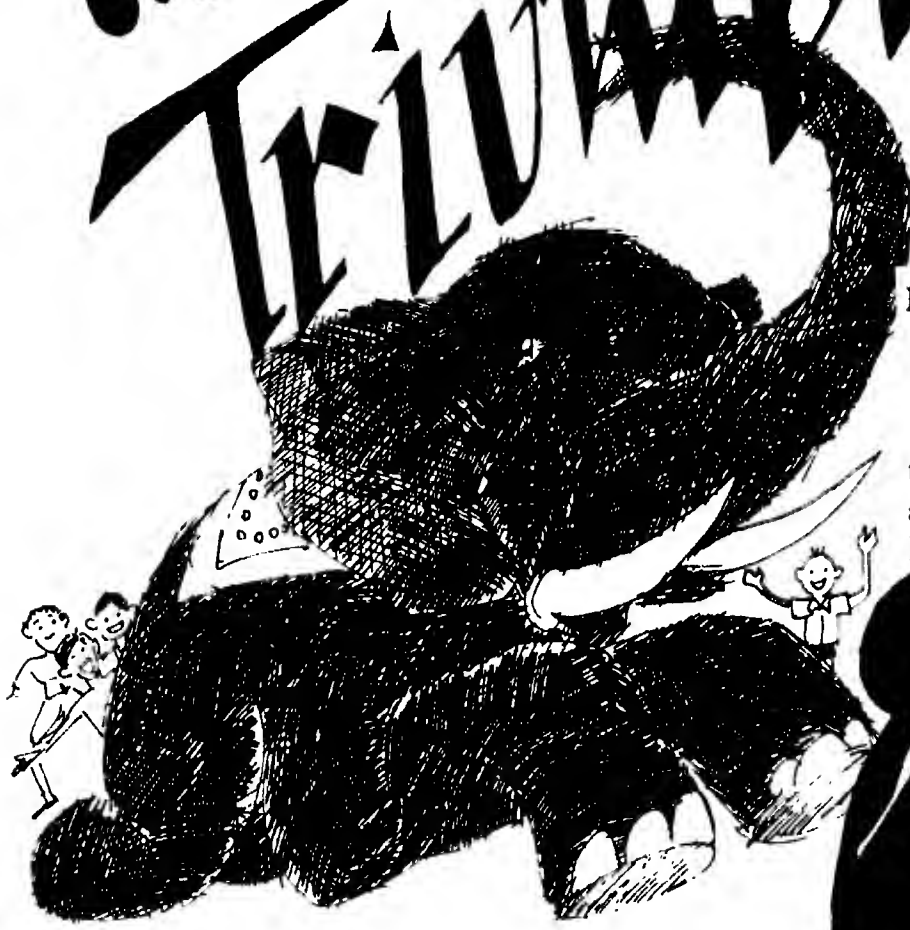


MANIKANDAN'S TRUWABLE

Story: T. J. ...
Illustrated by:
Nilabho Dha...

MANI ...
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the children ro ...
approval. ...
happy ...
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the Lon ...
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Mani ...
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Today Mani would be taken to the nearby pond for a thorough wash—he would be scrubbed royally—and then decked up with ornaments for a function which would be a run-up to the main event.



Mani enjoyed all this extra attention and care. For two days, even the Lord seemed to be at his mercy.

The mahout, Devan, came early in the morning. Devan and Mani had had a tiff the previous month when Devan had hit him mercilessly and chained all four legs to a tree for a full week, starving him of food and clean water. Mani had suffered the agony in silence, drawing comfort from the love that little devotees showered on him.

Devan was by his side early and Mani too responded, having decided to forget the earlier incident. But Devan still wasn't in a very good mood. His treatment of the tusker had brought him bad publicity. The authorities and animal lovers had berated him. Now Devan was determined to make Mani the target of his ire.

Mani lowered himself and Devan climbed on to him. And soon began Devan's mischief. He began hitting the elephant and poking him. At first, Mani thought his master was in a playful mood and ignored the barbs. But when the pain grew, Mani realised this was serious business. Devan was cruelly pricking his back and in spite of his thick

skin, the pain was getting to be unbearable.

The duo had by now reached the riverside with a horde of children behind them and elders looking on as Devan continued with his evil deeds. None of them dared to rebuke the mahout for Devan was ill-famed for his bad temper, foul language and devilish behaviour.

Mani then took his bath, felt fresh and began the trudge back to the temple. Normally the trek would take 15 minutes but today it took half an hour with a huge crowd following them. When they finally reached the temple, Devan who thought he had taught Mani a lesson, nudged the tusker to sit. But Mani stood rooted to the spot. Devan nudged him a few more times, but to no avail. Everyone watched as Devan tried his best to make Mani lower himself a little for the mahout to jump off.

But Mani was clearly having the last laugh. Bystanders looked on with curiosity and amazement at this live spectacle of an animal paying back a

human being in the same coin.

Half an hour passed. It soon became an hour. And before long, it was late afternoon. Neither Mani nor Devan had eaten anything. Devan couldn't risk jumping off from a height of 10 feet—Mani's height—and if he did, there was always the grave danger of the elephant lashing out at him with his trunk. And he knew that would be the end of him.

All this while, the temple authorities were busy trying to find a way out. A few hours later they finally hit upon a solution. They brought out a huge idol of the presiding deity and placed it in front of Mani. Devan sat atop, terrified, waiting for Mani's next move. As everyone watched, tears flowed out of Mani's eyes as he slowly sat down. And, in a flash, Devan jumped off and ran away.

The temple authorities dismissed Devan with immediate effect and a new mahout was appointed in his place. Next morning, Mani was decked up for the annual festival and everyone marvelled at how dashing he looked.

The following week, Mani was back in his old favourite spot, munching coconut leaves.

CROSSROADS 6

Environmentally Yours!

S.S.

Focussing on this month's theme—the environment—*Environmentally Yours!* tests your knowledge of certain basic and familiar facts.

Across

1. The poet who wrote 'Water everywhere, not any drop to drink' (9)
5. The condition when a layer of warm air settles over a layer of cooler air that lies near the ground, preventing pollutants from rising and scattering (7, 9)
7. The term given to the breaking up of rocks and similar material by physical and chemical processes (10)
8. The wearing away of soil (7)
9. The gas that protects the earth from ultraviolet rays of the sun (5)
10. The place in which a plant or animal lives in nature (7)

11. The unit in which sound is measured (7)

15. The ingredient essential for photosynthesis present in plants (11)

CLUES

17. Oil derived from remains of prehistoric plants and animals (6, 5)

19. The term given to everything that is external to an organism (11)

20. The period in which birds evolved on earth (8)

21. The person who said, "In nature there is enough for everyone's need, but too little for everyone's greed" (1, 1, 6)

22. The movement where the people of an area hugged trees to prevent them from being cut (6)

23. The disease caused by harmful ultraviolet

radiation from the Sun (4, 6)

Down

2. The scientific name for the earth's crust (11)

3. The term given to the warming

up of the earth's surface that results when the earth's atmosphere traps the sun's heat (10, 6)

4. The management, protection and wise use of natural resources (12)

5. The system through which airborne pollutants enter the body (11)

12. What Mt. Fujiyama is (7)

13. The name for the self-sustaining community of plants and animals taken together with its inorganic environment (8)

14. One of the ways to preserve the fertility of the soil (4, 8)

16. The reprocessing of waste products for reuse (9)

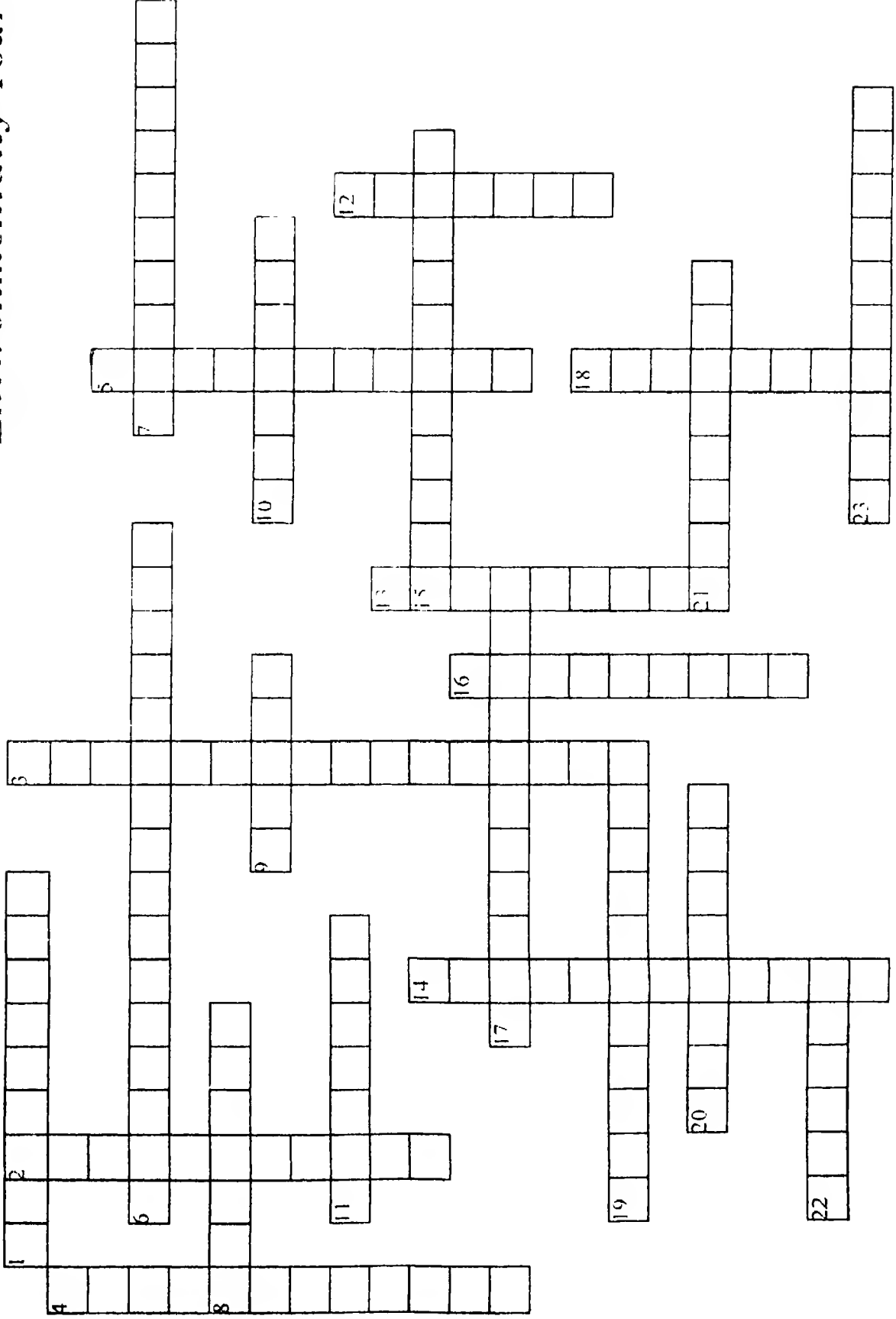
18. Gaseous pollutants like sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide dissolve in water and come down as (4, 4)

Hurry up and send in the completed crossword! Last date for receiving entries: June 15, 1996. The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year gift subscription to *Children's World*. Answers and results in the August 1996 issue.

Congratulations B. Vasantha, New Delhi! Winner of *Collectively Yours!* April 1996

CROSSROADS 6

Environmentally Yours!





**Celebrating Diversity: A CEE-NFS exclusive for
Children's World by Mamata Pandya**

Illustrations: Subir Roy

Imagine yourself far out in space. Looking out from a spaceship, you would see our planet as just a tiny speck in the vastness of the universe. And yet, this planet—our planet Earth—is the only planet that we know of

where life exists. The words of an astronaut on a space mission beautifully sum up just what we might feel like saying:

“Looking outward to the blackness of space, sprinkled with the glory of a universe of lights, I

saw majesty but no welcome. Below was a welcoming planet. There combined in the thin, moving, incredibly fragile shell of the biosphere is everything that is dear to you, all the human drama and comedy. That is where life is...”

What is it that makes life possible on Earth? To begin with, it is its very position in the solar system. The Earth is what it is, because of where it is. If our planet were closer to the sun, it would be too hot to support life. If it were further away, it would be too cold. Apart from this, the planet Earth has some special characteristics that make life possible—its atmosphere, its soil and the presence of water. It is these that make our planet habitable or livable, and self-sufficient.

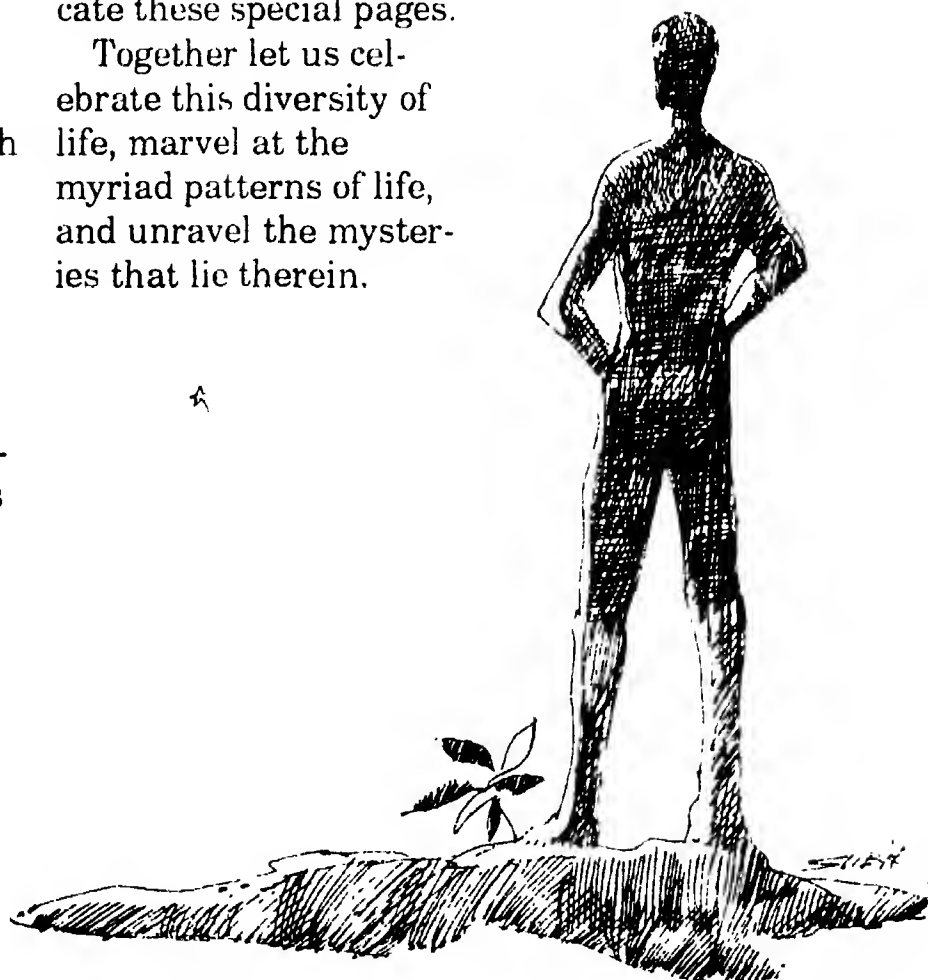
We can think of Earth itself as a spaceship containing all the air, water and land that we will ever have. The energy that drives this 'spaceship' comes from the sun. It is this spaceship that we think of as home.

But have we ever paused to think that Earth is not *our* home alone. It is a home that we share with millions of trillions of other living organisms. It is a home which offers the basics that make life

possible for a mind-boggling variety of life forms—from the mightiest of the blue whales to the minutest of invisible microbes. And somewhere, somewhere in this immense, rich, teeming diversity of life is also the human being. Only one of the inhabitants of this unique planet.

It is to these immeasurable, uncountable and uncounted living things—our co-inhabitants of spaceship Earth—that we dedicate these special pages.

Together let us celebrate this diversity of life, marvel at the myriad patterns of life, and unravel the mysteries that lie therein.





Life on Earth?

Imagine that you are on a journey upward from the centre or core of the Earth. You are walking at a leisurely pace. For the first twelve weeks you would travel through the burning rocks and molten lava where no life exists. Three minutes before you reach the surface, you would encounter the first organisms in the form of bacteria feeding on nutrients that have filtered deep underwater. As you reach the surface of the Earth, you would be dazzled by the millions of life forms that you would see—micro-organisms,

plants and animals—spread right across the Earth's surface. Still walking upwards at the same pace, you would find that only half a minute later, almost all life has disappeared. Upwards still, two hours later on your walk, you would find only faint traces of life—consisting mainly of people in aeroplanes!

This unusual analogy by a great contemporary life scientist paints a vivid picture of how much life is supported on a comparatively very small portion of the Earth.

If we were to try and express this in another way, we could say that the region with all this multitude of life makes up only one part in ten billion of the Earth's mass. This layer of Earth which consists of the living organisms and their environment is called the **Biosphere**. This is the only region of Earth where life can exist naturally, and it extends only from the bottom of the sea to the highest point of the atmosphere.

Did You Know?
The biosphere is the only suitable habitat we have—our only home and its resources are finite.

The Great Encyclopedia of Life

Imagine for a moment that all the tremendous variety of living things on Earth are finally discovered and then described. Suppose you were given the job of putting together a compilation of all this information. And you decide that you will devote one page for one species. The description would contain the scientific name, a photograph or drawing, a brief description and information on where the species is found.

All this would be compiled in order to be published as a book. These would be bound in volumes of 1000 pages, making each volume about 17 cm wide. By the time the information about all species were to be compiled, each volume covering a million species would occupy 60 metres of shelf space in a library. If we assumed that there were 100 million species or organisms on earth, the volumes would extend through 6 km of space in a library!

Explained in terms of numbers alone, we could put it this way: the recent estimate of the total

number of species on Earth is 13-14 million. Of these, just 1.75 million have been scientifically described.

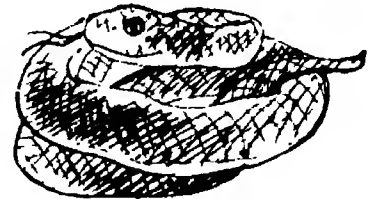
Describing Diversity

"When it comes to biodiversity, we live on a mysterious and unexplored planet."

E.O. Wilso

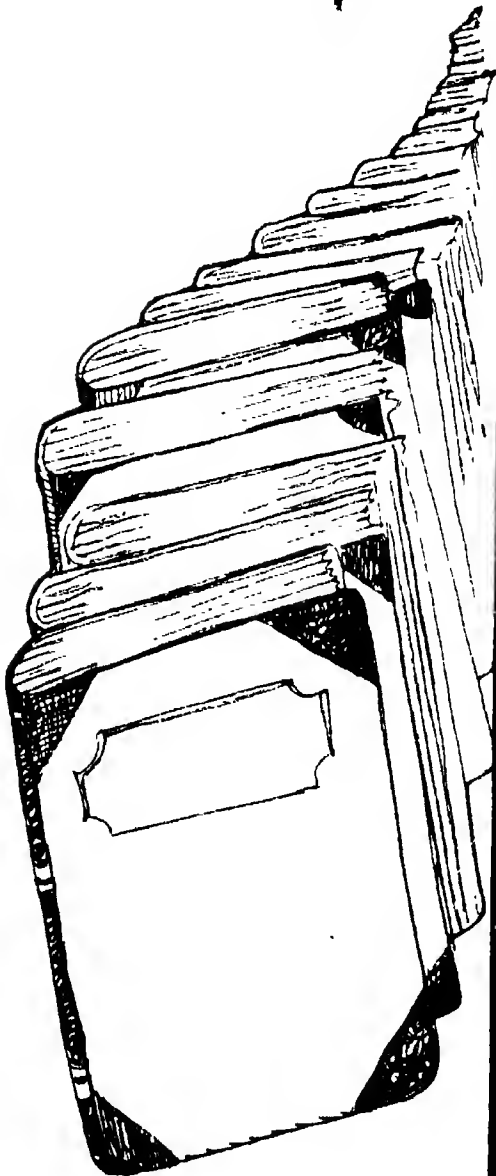
There is a tremendous diversity in nature—an invaluable treasure house of wild and cultivated species, diverse in form and function. But first we have to find all these plants and animals, and describe them. Then we can try and understand what role each of these plays in the great web of life. Scientists measure the diversity of life not only by species, but by genera, families and other higher categories of classification upto

and including phyla and kingdoms. Each such higher unit is a cluster of species that resembles one another and are believed to share a common ancestry.



Did You Know?

Scientists believe that less than 5 per cent of the world's species have been recorded by humans.





Seeking Order in Variety

The Chinese say that the beginning of wisdom is calling things by their right names. When it comes to giving names to the millions of plant and animal species that have been found so far, scientists face quite a challenge. Fortunately while there is a tremendous variety of sizes, structures and functions among living things, there are also sufficient similarities to permit their grouping into orderly patterns. This grouping is called **classification**. The science of classifying is called **taxonomy**. The scientists who take on the work of classification are called taxonomists.

One system of classification was devised by Linnaeus, an eighteenth century Swedish botanist. According to this system, mainly Latin words were used for classification purposes. This made it possible for people all over the world to speak a common language of scientific names.

The basic sequence in classification is *Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species*.

Kingdom is the broadest classification within

which animal kingdom and plant kingdom are the two main divisions. Under kingdom the first division is *Phylum*. In the animal kingdom scientists make two divisions—animals with backbones (vertebrates) and animals without backbones (invertebrates). This division is called phylum. Vertebrates make up the phylum which includes mammals, fishes, amphibians, reptiles and birds.

The next subdivision is *class*. For example, among vertebrates, mammals make up the class Mammalia. Among plants, flowering plants form a single class. The number of members in a particular class vary greatly. For example, the class Insecta contains about 3 million species.

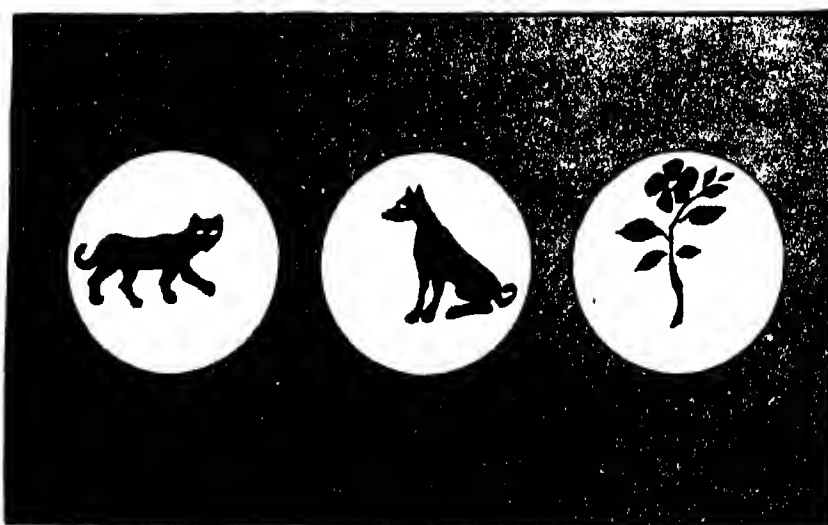
Within each class there are one or more *orders*. For example, the class

Mammalia contains the order Rodentia which includes rodents like rats etc., or Primates which includes monkeys and humans.

Shared characteristics in terms of anatomy, habits etc. help to put organisms into a particular order. For example, carnivores are basically meat eaters, and insectivores are mainly insect eaters.

Each order consists of **families**. For example, dogs belong to one family, while cats belong to another.

After family comes *genus* and *species*. These are the long, unpronounceable double names you may see after the common name of an animal or plant. Genus and species are specific forms of identification, somewhat like names for individual people. They



are specially useful when referring to similar animals on different continents. For example the Asiatic lion is *Panthera leo persica* while the African lion is *Panthera leo leo*.

As you may have noticed, most of the names of genus and species are in Latin. These words are usually typed in *italics* after the common name.

Did You Know?
Less than 1500 taxonomists are skilled in the identification of species growing in the tropics.

The first letter of genus is capitalized, the species is not.

Classification is not static. With new studies and discoveries, our knowledge about the living world continues to grow and change. Thus classification may also change from time to time.

And in case you are worried about how to remember the basic sequence in classification, here is a fun way to do so. Make a sentence with words that begin with the first letters of the sequence. These are KPCOFGS For example: King Porus Came Over For Green Samosas!

Make your own unforgettable phrase. Keep this as a guide to your memory, and get the classification right!



A Variety of Words

We have seen that we share this planet with millions of plant and animals species which have already been described, or classified by taxonomists. Sharing the planet with us are many more species which have not been discovered yet, and may never be discovered.

The term that is used to describe this tremendous diversity is

Biodiversity—a combination of two words 'biological' and 'diversity'. You could say that biodiversity refers to the number, variety and variability of all life forms—micro-organisms, plants and animals—and the ecological complexes they inhabit.

Which brings us to another term that you must often be hearing of—**Ecology**. What does someone mean when they



say that they are studying **Ecology**? Put very simply, they are studying our home—the **biosphere**. As we have just read, it is only in this fragile layer of our planet Earth that all life exists. The term ecology itself comes from two Greek words 'oikos' meaning house or place to live, and 'logos' meaning study. The term was coined in 1866 by the German biologist Ernst Hackel. Today ecology refers to the study of the structure and function of nature. We could describe it as the study, not just of all the inhabitants of Earth, but more importantly of the relationships among living organisms and the totality of the physical and biological factors that make up their environment or surroundings.

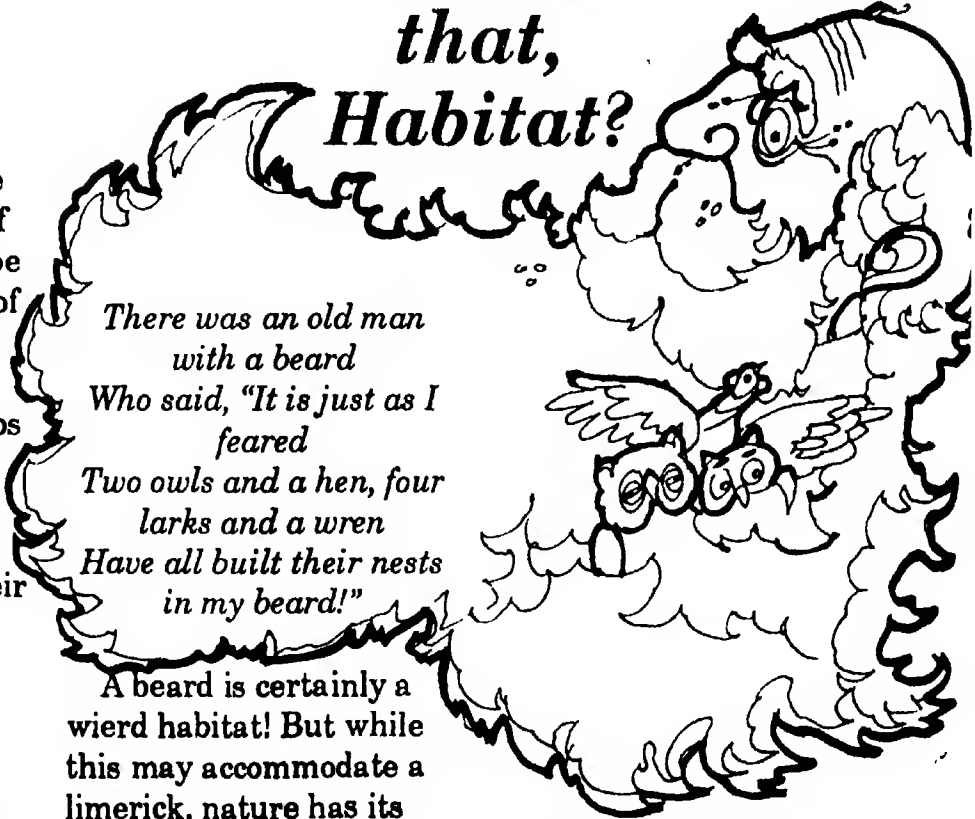
While the Earth is home to millions of species, yet even within the biosphere, every species has a locality or particular kind of environment that it naturally occupies. This is called its **habitat**. In other words—the place where it lives. A habitat could be described as the 'address' of a plant or animal.

Habitat is not just a place to live. It is more than a house. It includes

food, water, shelter and adequate space. Even more important, these components of habitat must be in a suitable arrangement. So whatever the size of a habitat—from a vast forest to

the underside of a leaf—the habitat provides food, water, shelter and space, in its proper arrangement, to its inhabitants. Whatever terms we use to study it, our Earth is our only habitat—our home.

What's that, Habitat?



*There was an old man
with a beard
Who said, "It is just as I
feared
Two owls and a hen, four
larks and a wren
Have all built their nests
in my beard!"*

A beard is certainly a wierd habitat! But while this may accommodate a limerick, nature has its own share of wide and varied habitats.

An entire community of living things can live in the small pools of rain-water that collect in the hollows formed by the leathery leaves of a plant called bromeliad. A scientist who drained one of those miniature pools discovered at least a dozen

kinds of insects in it, and even found tiny crabs.

Some creatures such as tree frogs and mosquitoes grow to adulthood in these pools, while others may spend their entire life in the pool in the hollow of the leaf of the plant.

Take another example. We know that a tree is home to innumerable

creatures. One would imagine that when a tree dies and falls down, it becomes just a rotting log. We would be mistaken. Beneath the log is a world inhabited by a large array of tiny creatures—beetles and bugs, moths and ants, worms and spiders, and birds and small reptiles. This dead tree, too, is home because it provides not only shelter but sources of food, water, places to hide, places to nest and places to grow.

The leaf of the bromeliad and the rotting log could be described as examples of microhabitats.



Specialized Homes

The tremendous diversity of life is not limited only to those habitats that seem to obviously offer the basics of food, shelter and space. Scientists have found life in regions which would be considered quite uninhabitable. It is the inhabitants that have developed special features to survive in the harsh conditions.

In the bays of Antarctica, the coldest marine habitats on earth, where the water is cold enough to turn ordinary blood to ice, fishes live and thrive. These fishes generate an antifreeze element in their own bodies. Around the fishes are a host of other marine creatures—each with their own protective devices to survive the freezing waters.

In the burning heat of the deserts live unique collections of plants, insects and reptiles adapted to survive the harshest of conditions.

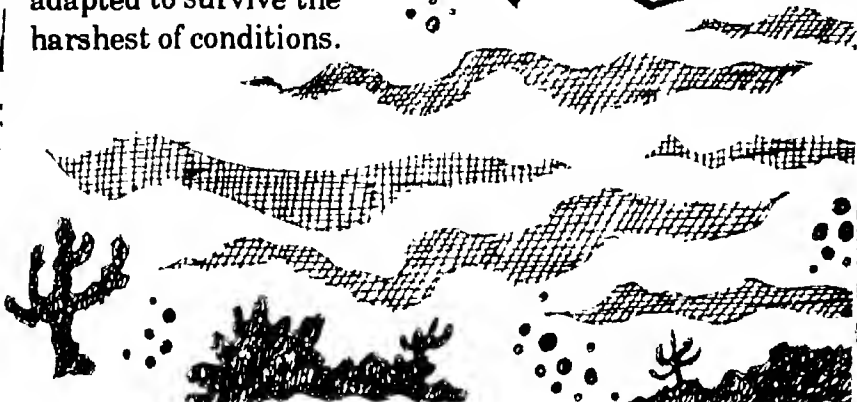
In the perpetual darkness of the world's deepest and dampest caves live numerous insects, feeding on the fungi and bacteria that grow there, and in turn being eaten by larger insects—all of them blind—specialized for a life in the dark.

And even in the boiling water of hot springs, deep down at the bottom of the seas, scientists have discovered unique one-celled micro-organisms that thrive in waters upto 110°C.

Diversity and adaptability have made life possible in the most remote regions of our planet.

Did You Know?

Scientists estimate that the deep ocean floor could be home to 10 million undiscovered species.



Habitat Ads

Have you ever looked at the classified ads for houses in the newspaper. You know, the ones that say 'To let: 2 bedroom flat with kitchen, bathroom and balcony'.

As humans, we are quite used to stating our specifications when we are planning to buy, rent or sell property. Suppose the other animals also started putting in ads for their property? Imagine an executive ant with a 10-storey termite tower to rent out, or a fastidious weaver bird looking out for a nest designed by an architect! What would these ads be like?

The best way to find out would be to imagine that you are the animal or bird seeking or selling a habitat with special reference to your needs in terms of space, shelter, food and water. To do this you would have to find out a little more about that particular animal or bird. What kind of habitat does it live in normally, what are its food habits, does it prefer to live alone or in a group, does it have any special preferences? Are there any characteristics or other peculiar features that could help you create not only an interesting

advertisement, but also add a creative punch to it?

To help you get started here are two classifieds. See if you can guess which animal would want to live there!

Cool Castle

Large sixteenth century ruined tomb. Spacious enough to accommodate thousands. Suitable dark and damp conditions within. Large orchards of juicy fruit trees within flying distance. Occupy now before restoration begins.

Pachyderm Paradise

Large tracts of green forest available. Delectable bamboo groves within easy reach. Dotted with water holes ideal for mud baths. Fun and frolic for the whole clan. Grab this jumbo offer now!

Answers:
Cool Castle: Bats
Pachyderm Paradise:
Elephants

Might in Numbers

Of the millions of organisms that live on this earth, which do you think are the largest in number? The first reaction would be to say "human beings", of course. Why, our species seems to be just about everywhere. Well, for all our arrogance, we would be surprised to learn that we are quite wrong. And, we would probably be astounded to find out that the record for the most abundant organisms on Earth is held by insects! And even amongst insects, it is the ants that dominate. From the Arctic circle to the tip of South America, there are over 20,000 species of ants; and those are only the ones that have been discovered so far!

In the rain forests ants make up ten per cent of what scientists call the biomass. That is, if all the animals, birds and insects in the forest were to be collected, dried up and weighed, for every 100 kg of combined animal

weight, 10 kg would be made up by ants alone!

The next time you flick away a tiny little ant, think again. Remember, there are more insects than any other creatures in the world!

Did You Know?

For every 45 kg of people, there are 450 kg of termites.

The Indian Treasure House

The Indian region is very rich in biological diversity. It is estimated that about 45,000 species of plants occur in our country. We have more than 50,000 species of insects, 4,000 of molluscs, 6,500 of other invertebrates, 2,000 species of fish, 140 species of amphibians, 420 of reptiles, 1,200 of birds and 340 species of mammals.

One of the reasons that makes this variety possible is the fact that almost every type of habitat is found here—from areas with heaviest rainfall to the driest of deserts; from the snow-capped peaks of the world's highest mountains to the oceans that wash a coastline that is almost 7,000 km long. The Indian subcontinent also occupies a unique position in terms of its biogeography—

accommodating elements from African, European, Chinese and Indo-Malayan regions in its flora and fauna.

It is indeed unusual that a single country can host such a great variety of life forms.

Did You Know?

India's recorded plant and animal species together make up about 6.5 per cent of the world's known plants and wildlife.

How Many Zeros?

(N)o one is quite sure how many species live on our planet. So far 1.4 million species have been identified. But scientists

estimate that the total number of species on Earth could be anywhere between 10 and 100 million.

Who is who, and how many, in these 1.4 million known species? Scientists have given the following estimates:

Bacteria	4,800 species
Fungi	69,000
Algae	26,900
Trees, shrubs and higher plants	248,400
Protozoa	30,800
Sponges	5,000
Corals and jellyfish	9,000
Flatworms	12,200
Roundworms	12,000
Earthworms	12,000
Clams and other molluscs	50,000
Seastars and relatives	6,100
Insects	751,000
Spiders and other non-insect arthropods	123,400
Fishes	18,800
Amphibians	4,200
Reptiles	6,300
Birds	9,000
Mammals	4,000



And if you think you are beginning to see zeros instead of stars, how about this?

(Statistics from *The Diversity of Life* by E.O. Wilson)

How many viruses do you think will fit into a teaspoonful of unpolluted water? Scientists in Norway have estimated that the number could exceed one billion. That is a spoonful of 1,000,000,000 viruses!





The Root of All Life

We have looked at the tremendous variety in the animal kingdom—from viruses to whales. We often tend to forget that the plant kingdom is as rich and diverse. And it is this that supports all animal life on earth. Of the 1.4 million species of living organisms so far identified, 248,000 are plants.

We may not realise it but plants provide us with the very basics necessary

for life—food, fuel, fodder, fibre, shelter, medicine and much more. Every aspect of our life can be traced back to a dependence on plants.

Can you name two plants each which give you these?

The Indian region is particularly rich in plant diversity with an estimated 45,000 species of plants occurring here. These include flowering and non-flowering plants such as ferns, algae and fungi. This represents about 7 per cent of the world's flora. Our plant

diversity is not only tremendously rich but also unique—18 per cent of all the plants occurring here, in the Indian region, are found only in India.

Plants for food

Our region is also special because it is the original home of a number of plant species that have today spread to all parts of the world. Scientists believe that at least 166 species of crops originated in the Indian subcontinent. This includes rice, maize, cow pea, cucumber, egg plant. It is also the centre of origin of tropical fruits like banana and mango. Spices such as pepper, cardamom,

arecanut, coconut, jute and tea also began their worldwide spread from this part of the world. Even within each of these, there is tremendous variety.

The simplest proof would be to keep a tally of the numerous varieties of mangoes you eat this summer.

We all know that even though we just say “mangoes”, every variety has its distinctive appearance and, of course, flavour. In fact, you may be surprised to know that India has more than 1000 named varieties of mango. And, don't we all have our favourites from the wide range?

Or take rice. It is estimated that possibly 50,000 to 60,000 varieties of rice was grown in India not so long ago. Go to a provision store and check out how many varieties of rice are being sold. Observe the variety in appearance, fragrance etc. If you talk to different people, you will discover that every family has its own preferences to suit not only taste, but also the kind of dishes the rice is used for.



Can you list out the local names of five varieties of rice?



Plants to heal

Besides providing food, plants are also a source of many medicines. Over 25 per cent of modern medicines are derived from plant sources. Today they come in the form of syrups and pills, but their basic ingredients come from plants. And every household has some traditional remedies that are made directly from plants for a number of ailments, be it a paste of leaves, or boiling the bark, or drying and powdering roots of plants.

Find out about household remedies that use plants. Which plants are used? What part of the plant is used? How is the remedy used—is it to be swallowed, or applied or used in some other way?

Disappearing plants

Today thousands of plant species are being lost forever as their natural habitats are being destroyed. Forests are being cleared to make room for fields; wetlands including ponds and lakes are being filled to make dry land for growing cities; hillsides are being cleared for timber. With every habitat that is lost, we are losing innumerable plants. With the plant loss

we are losing not only the plant, but a host of other creatures that found their habitat in that plant.

As worrying as the loss of habitats and plant species is the loss in our tremendous variety in crops species. With modern agriculture and cultivation of single, rather than mixed crops, with hybrids and chemical use, we are losing the great diversity in our crops. This is a loss not only to the richness of our own cultures and cuisines, but a great threat to the very existence of our crops. A single wave of disease could kill off all the crops as there would be no variety which could resist the threat. And the world could starve. We must have crop diversity to save ourselves.

*Can you make a list of all the food items made in your house that use rice in some form or the other? Don't forget, this should include everything from **kheer** to **idlis**! Think of what you could use as a substitute if suddenly a disease wiped out all the rice crop in the world.*

Food for thought

We think that we eat so many plants as part of our food. But of the 30,000

species of plants that are known to have edible parts, only 7,000 kinds have ever been cultivated or collected as food. Even out of those, 90 per cent of the world's food is provided by 20 species of plants. Of that, three species—wheat, rice and maize—supply more than half the world's food.

Did You Know?

A conservative estimate projects that by the year 2050 upto 60,000 plant species (one in every four) will become extinct or nearly extinct.



Explore and Discover

Tropical forests are said to contain at least half of the world's living species. A one hectare plot of tropical forests contains between 50-150 tree species. And these play host to a teeming popula-

tion of other species of flora and fauna—from the tops of the tree canopies to the soil of the forest floor.

While we can't all go exploring rain forests to discover this wild variety of life, we certainly can



play explorer in the nearest green patch, wherever we are. Here is an interesting way to spend a morning or evening outdoors with a few friends. Better still try it on a picnic. All you will need to carry with you is a ball of string about 50 metres long, a measuring tape (preferably one at least 15 metres long), some pegs or twigs to be used as pegs, a notebook, and a pen.

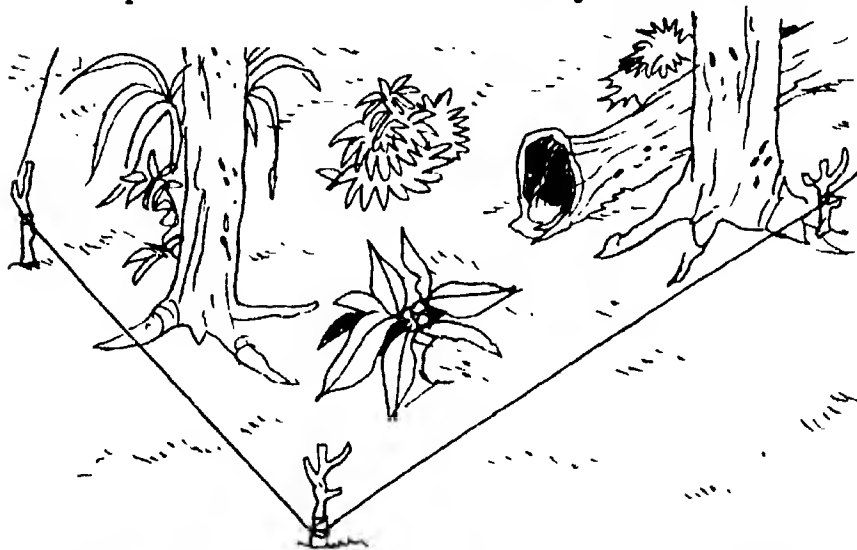
First of all locate an area which has a good tree or plant cover.

trees of that species in your plot, e.g. Neem—3 trees, Mango—1 tree. Now look at the other plants in the plot. Are there shrubs, herbs, flowering plants, grass? List all these too. If you do not know the names of all, try to describe these. For example, you could note: Small plants with blue flowers—3 numbers; shrubs with tiny leaves, thorns and red berries—2 numbers; grass—4 varieties; creeper with pink flowers—1; etc.

Once you have taken an

base of the trees. Study the cracks in the bark. Who lives there? And don't forget to look up into the branches and the leaves. Are there any birds—visiting or resident? Do you see any nests?

You could go on and on once you begin. And don't forget to list everything that you see. Never mind the names, but do write up a brief description of what you spot. You can spend an hour or half a day, looking, listening and learning. Try this whenever you are in a different kind of habitat—a field, a hilly area, a wooded spot. You will discover how many living things share a habitat. That's what makes every corner of our Earth so special.



Using the tape, mark out a plot which is 10 m x 10 m. Use four pegs for corners and tie the string for the perimeter. Look at the variety of plants in this plot. How many trees do you see? Do you know what species they are? If yes, name these. If not, describe the tree. Make a table with the name of the species and the number of

inventory of the plants in your plot, turn your attention to the other living things in that area. Do you see ants? More than one type? Can you spot butterflies or dragonflies? What lies hidden beneath those stones, or pile of fallen leaves? What about those holes, and mounds in the soil? Observe the area around the

Did You Know?

A single tree in the tropics can have more than 1,000 different kinds of insects living on it at one time.

Enter the Humans

Our biosphere—our habitat on planet Earth has been shaped through four billion years of evolution. Through this eon of time many changes have occurred. In the course of evolution, species have naturally come and gone, patterns of life have adapted and altered, sometimes drastically, but

life has gone on. That is, until *Homo sapiens* (yes, us humans) entered the picture. The latest entrants on the evolutionary stage—our species has the ability to alter the entire biosphere radically. In doing so, we are in danger of destroying our own habitat—the only one we have.

What are we doing to our habitat?

To begin with we are destroying the habitats of our fellow spaceship travellers. To build our cities and houses we are clearing forests and fields, filling ponds and lakes, damming rivers and streams. As we move into our concrete habitats, have we ever considered what must have happened to the hundreds of thousands of other creatures that inhabited these areas?

When we are not directly destroying habitats, we do so indirectly. This is through pollution. Our oil leaks and spills kill thousands in the seas; the sediments from our construction sites choke to death entire coral reefs. Our pesticides flow into water bodies where they poison all that lives there, while plastics smother turtles and dolphins. The dirty air that our vehicles and factories belch out falls back to earth as acid rain, wiping out forests and lakes. What right have we to poison others?

Sometimes we disturb the balance by introducing new species into areas where they do not naturally belong. The trouble starts when the new species, which generally does not have any natural enemies in the new habitat, begins to spread rapidly and, in the process, ends up wiping out the original inhabitants of the area. Slowly, even the basic features of the habitat change.

But why are we, as a species, so bent upon destroying the very habitat that makes our life



possible? Well, there are just too many of us, and this ever-exploding population has the same basic needs—food, water, shelter, clothing, fuel. So we rush out and grab all that we can, not realising that we are biting the hand that feeds us.

If meeting basic needs was not enough, we want more of everything—more products that need more resources, life styles that are over consumptive. As a result we are not just stressing, but overstressing our own planet and all that it can give us.

Through these actions, human beings are posing the biggest threat to the life of the other inhabitants of planet Earth. The minimum number of species currently threatened with extinction

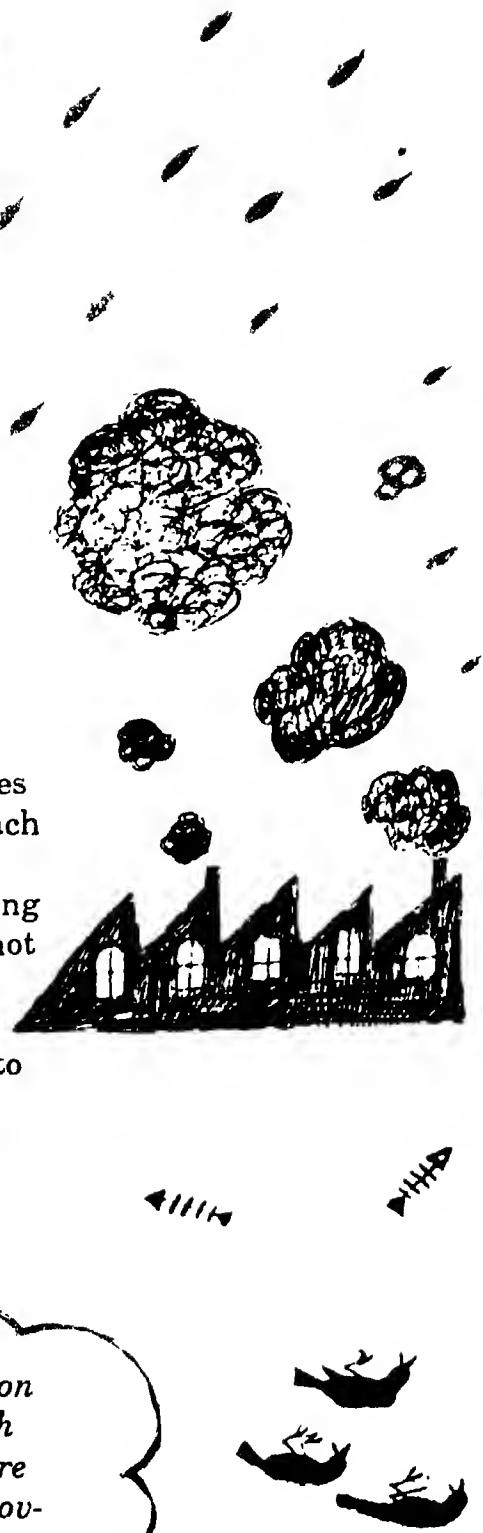
includes 5,400 animals and 4,000 plants.

It is estimated that approximately 70 species are becoming extinct each day. And because these extinctions are happening so fast, and they have not occurred in the natural scheme of things, the Earth may not be able to recover its losses for millions of years.

What kind of habitat are we leaving for our great-grandchildren?

"The library of life is on fire. We must extinguish this fire before even more treasures, yet to be discovered, are lost beyond recovery."

**Gro Harlem
Brundtland**



Imagine

Imagine for a few minutes that we humans have decided that we really don't need all those plants and birds and animals anymore. After all, we need all their habitats—the fields and the forests, the ponds, rivers and lakes, the deserts and the plains—for space to build our own concrete jungles. After all, we could say, we have the power of technology, we don't need anything else. We can manage for ourselves. Well, be that as it may, just give these a thought.

*The next meal you sit down to enjoy, consider for a moment the source of all the items you are eating. Don't forget the spices and condiments that make the dishes so mouthwatering. Now name one item from your meal that did not originate from soil, plants or animals.

*About 40 per cent of the medicines used throughout the world have active ingredients extracted from plants and animals. Name two traditional or "family special" remedies used in your home that are directly

derived from a plant or animal source (e.g. turmeric and honey mixture to ease a sore throat; *tulsi* for relieving a cold etc.)

*Think of five animals, birds or insects that are an integral part of your daily life even today and imagine in what way their disappearance would affect your life (e.g. no cows or buffaloes would mean no milk).

*Carry out a survey of all the other 'inhabitants' of your home besides your family. No, we don't mean just your pets. What about the ants, the geckos, the cockroaches, and who knows what else shares your habitat.

*In 1993 there were approximately 5.5 billion people on this planet, more than double the Earth's population in 1950. And, every day 250,000 more people add to the Earth's population. How many would that make in one year?

*In the two months of summer vacation that you will enjoy, the world could lose 1,500 species.

"We should realise that if human beings should be removed from the Earth, the Earth could probably heal itself and become once again a planet where oceans are clear, the air pure, and the forests green and full of wildlife.

Remember, the Earth, its plants and animals can survive without us, but we cannot survive without them."

Albert Baez

The Princess and the Parrot



STORY: SUNANDA KATHALAY
ILLUSTRATIONS: *Beejee*

THE PRINCESS WALKS
ALONG THE RIVER. SHE
SEES A FISH CAUGHT
BETWEEN SOME ROCKS...

HELP ME, SOMEBODY!
I'M DYING



THANK YOU,
NOBLE LADY!
YOU LOOK
TROUBLED.
CAN I HELP
YOU?

I'VE TO REACH
THE ISLAND
IN THE RED SEA



HERE, TAKE THIS PEARL. RUB THIS PEARL
IN YOUR RIGHT PALM, YOU'LL TRAVEL
10 MILES IN ONE SECOND. BUT THE PEARL
WILL DIMINISH IN SIZE EACH TIME YOU
RUB IT. SO USE IT CAREFULLY...



SOON IT BECAME STORMY.
THE PRINCESS TOOK
SHELTER UNDER A TREE.
SUDDENLY...



OH, YOU
POOR BIRD!
I'LL PUT
YOU BACK
IN YOUR
NEST.



STAY SAFELY, LI'L ONES TILL
YOUR MOTHER COMES BACK.



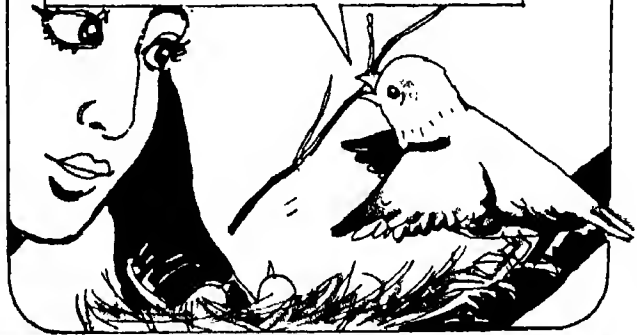
THE MOTHER BIRD RETURNS.

HOW CAN I REPAY
YOU FOR YOUR
KINDNESS.

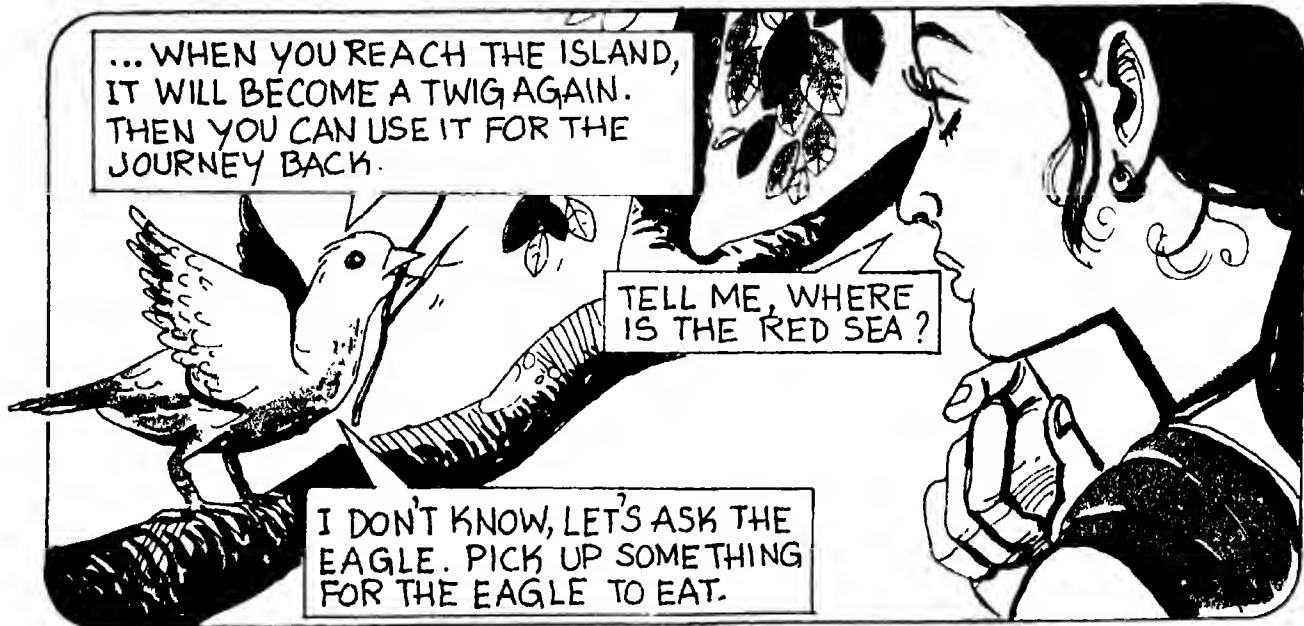


THE PRINCESS TOLD
THE BIRD HER STORY.

IF YOU PUT THIS TWIG IN THE
RED SEA, IT WILL BECOME
A BOAT. CROSS THE RED SEA
IN IT...



... WHEN YOU REACH THE ISLAND,
IT WILL BECOME A TWIG AGAIN.
THEN YOU CAN USE IT FOR THE
JOURNEY BACK.



TELL ME, WHERE
IS THE RED SEA?

I DON'T KNOW, LET'S ASK THE
EAGLE. PICK UP SOMETHING
FOR THE EAGLE TO EAT.

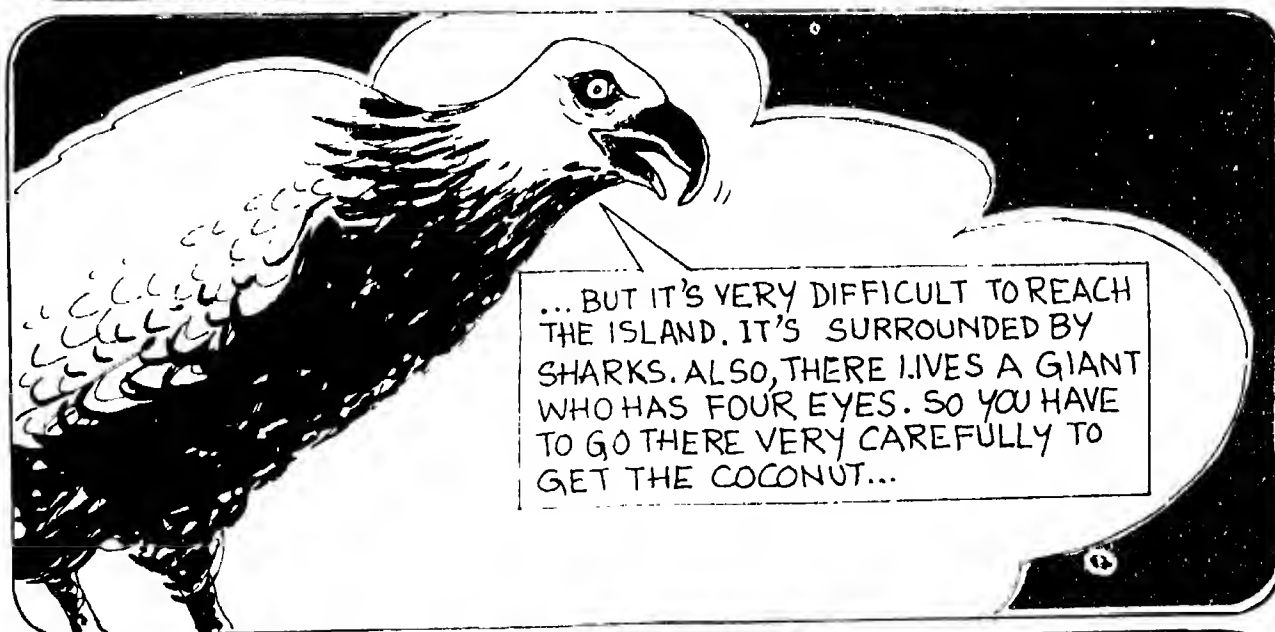
HERE, A DEAD FROG! LET'S
TAKE IT FOR THE EAGLE TO EAT.



THE HUNGRY EAGLE EATS IT
AND IS GRATEFUL.

WHAT CAN I DO
FOR YOU?







Story: Dipavali Debroy

Illustrations: Pijush Dutta

“FASTER!” Kirit urged himself as he streaked across the open stretch on his bicycle. The stretch lay between the village of Taltorh and the town of Bolpur in Birbhum, a border district of West Bengal.

Kirit had come to Bolpur on an excursion from his school in Calcutta. They were putting up at Parvati Nivas, the old *dharmashala* (rest-house) in Bolpur, and cycling all over the countryside. Today he had started out with the rest of the team towards Taltorh on a kind of rally. But, on the return journey, Kirit wandered away from the track he had been guided about. He was not sure now where he was, how far

away from the town. Nor could he see anyone else around. Meanwhile the clouds were gathering in the evening sky and he knew he must cycle as fast as possible towards Bolpur.

There was not a building in sight. It was just an arid spread of red earth and the only trees were the tall, black *taal* trees. There would be no shelter from the storm once it broke. He pedalled as fast as he could, but the speeding winds were faster. The storm broke right above him and there was a thunder-bolt that blinded him in a purple flash. The same instant, Kirit felt a tremendous physical blow descend on him. Stars exploded in Kirit's darkened brain and he fell crashing down from his

cycle.

The next thing, Kirit found himself lying flat on the ground and staring at the sky. All around him, he felt stone, grass and gnarled roots of trees. The rain was over. The ground felt watery and the sky was clear and starry.

“What in the world happened?” he thought to himself. His head ached terribly and he felt he did not even have the strength to sit up.

Suddenly his ears caught the sound of low laughter and he sat up and peered through the rather tall grass around him. Had it been this high all along? He wondered for a fleeting second. Then he forgot his query as he caught sight of two men sitting a little away, in a grass thicket.

They were dark, very dark. They wore very short *dhotis* and the upper portions of their bodies were bare. Their skin glistened in the starlight. Had they put some greasy substance on their bodies? But, why?

Round their heads of thick, black curls, there were two red sashes tied in knots. There were hibiscus flowers stuffed behind their ears.

They sat on their

haunches with some coins spread out before them on a piece of cloth. They were arranging them, one on top of the other. They looked pleased with themselves and one of them laughed again.

'I don't like the look of them,' said Kirit to himself.

Nearby there lay two long poles of bamboo. Next to the poles stood a rather strange object—a huge decorative box with

rods sticking out of it—a *palki* (palanquin), straight out of Kirit's textbook on Indian history! Its wooden surface was wet with rain and the painted patterns were shining. Before Kirit had taken all this in, there came a groan from somewhere beside him.

Kirit looked away from the men and the palanquin and made another discovery. Right behind him, half-hidden amidst the tall grass was



a boy of about ten, dressed in white *dhoti* and *kurta*. Rolling beside his tousled head was a *toapor* (a conical headgear typical of the bridegrooms of Bengal, crafted out of white, light wood). But why should a little boy have been wearing a bridegroom's headgear?

Forgetting his own discomfort, Kirit dragged himself to the boy and shook him hard. The boy frowned and even in that faint light, Kirit noticed that there were marks of *chandan* (sandalwood paste) on his forehead that the rain had not washed away. "Hey you, what's the matter?" Kirit whispered as low as he could.

The boy opened his eyes and looked at Kirit. His mouth opened as if to shriek, but, bending over him, Kirit put his hand across it. "Sh-h-h. They'll hear you, whoever they are." The boy's eyes looked terrified and bewildered. Kirit repeated himself in Bengali. This was a better bet. The boy nodded and Kirit removed his hand from his mouth. The boy hauled himself up to his feet, clutching at Kirit, but silently. Then instinctively they tried to move away from the two men

counting their money.

A safe distance away into the grass, Kirit asked in Bengali and all in one breath, "Who are you and what's happened to you? Who are those two men? And what's that *palki* doing here?"

He spoke in whispers and so did the boy.

"I am Parvati Charan Mukhopadhyaya from the village of Taltor and those two are *dakats* (dacoits or robbers). I was on my way to the village of Rampurhat when they attacked my *palki*. The palanquin-bearers ran away. So did the others with me. But I was inside the palanquin and I could not get out fast enough. The *dakats* caught me and struck me down."

"So it's your money they are counting over there!" said Kirit. "But, all that money, why is it in coins?"

"What else should it be in, paper?" Parvati Charan replied somewhat impatiently. But Kirit went on. "And where were you off to, decked up like this and in a palanquin of all things?"

"Can't you make out?" Parvati Charan said, this time with a grin. "To get married, you silly!"

"How can you crack jokes now!" said Kirit.

"Anyway, it's not funny at all."

"But I'm not joking," said Parvati Charan. "I *was* going to get married to the daughter of the Chattopadhyayas of Bolpur."

"I suppose your bride is a month old or something?" said Kirit, trying to be sarcastic.

"No," said Parvati Charan simply. "She's turned five last year."

Kirit was shocked.

Child marriage was illegal! It had been abolished long ago! But before he could say anything to Parvati Charan, there was a huge yawn from one of the two robbers—a terrifying sound in that silent night.

Kirit froze.

What if they turned round and saw that their victims were no longer where they had felled them down?

By then, the two men had finished counting the money and were digging a hole in the ground below a tall *taal* (palm) tree.

"Yes, Bilu, it is better to let the money lie here for a while," said one of them. They spoke in rough dialect, but it was Bengali all right. "Let's not try to use it in the market. The new magistrate *saab* has

put the whole district on an alert."

"I know, Raghu", said Bilu, putting coins into the hole and then packing it in with earth. "We'll dig it out when it's a bit safer. That O'Brien *saab* is very strict with the likes of us. He has vowed to make Birbhum dacoit-free."

"That's not so easy. These stretches are ours and we shall always haunt them," said Raghu. "It's our way of life. Why, we've been waylaying people for generations. But, of course, it's some-

what different now that the *gorasahibs* (Britishers) are kings."

"That's why we'll be careful for a while. But, Raghu, do you hear that?" said Bilu, picking up his ears.

"Hmm, Bilu," said the other, "I can."

But what was it that they could hear?

In a few seconds, it reached Kirit's ears as well.

Hum-huma-re hum-huma—

A strange refrain from the heart of darkness, a

refrain that was growing stronger and stronger.

Soon Kirit and Parvati Charan could see a row of lights in the distance, drawing nearer and nearer. Some four or five men were advancing, carrying *mashaals* (torches, flaming clumps of wood). Behind them was a huge palanquin—another one—borne at each end by a set of four men. The men were dressed in short *dhotis* that came up to their knees, and were dark, stout men with white



sashes tied round their foreheads. The palanquin itself was a grand affair, with carvings all over that shone in the torch-light.

In that eerie quiet, the two boys clutched each other and crouched on the ground, Parvati Charan almost in a faint.

"We're in luck today," they could hear Raghu say to Bilu. Bilu got up and picked up one of the bamboo poles lying on the ground. Bilu did the same.

Closer and closer came the sound. *Hum-huma-re hum-huma—*

The light from the torches grew brighter.

The boys waited silently. So did Bilu and Raghu.

When the palanquin was pretty near, there was a wild cry of *Ha-re-re-re-re* from Bilu and Raghu. With that cry, they bounded forward—towards the palanquin.

Scared out of their wits, the palanquin-bearers dropped the palanquin and fled. The men carrying the torches tried to put up a fight—trying to thrust their torches into

Raghu and Bilu. But Raghu and Bilu hit them thick and fast with their poles. Soon they too began to run away.

Kirit jumped into the fray. He lunged at Raghu who was raining blows upon a man. Taking Raghu unawares, he held him from the back round his oily waist. The other man began to run away and Kirit screamed, at him and all the others, "Come back! I've got one, and there are just two of them! Don't run away!"

But the man did not



even stop. Instead, Bilu came up from behind and wrenched Kirit's hands away from Raghu's waist. The three of them then rolled on the ground.

It was over pretty soon. Raghu and Bilu got the better of Kirit. They twisted his arms and tied them behind his back, and left him lying helpless on the ground.

"Where did this fellow come from?" Raghu asked Bilu.

"That's what I'm wondering," said Bilu. "This is not the kid in that earlier palanquin!"

"And what odd clothes he's in! Just like the kids of the *sahiblogs* (foreigners)," said Raghu.

"Anyway, let's not waste time on him," said Bilu. "Let's take a look at the loot!"

The place was absolutely deserted now. All the men had scattered away. Only the palanquin sat where its bearers had hastily put it down. Raghu and Bilu went up to it.

The door of the palanquin, Kirit observed, was shut from inside.

"Open up," screamed Bilu, "or I'll smash the palanquin."

Raghu thumped impatiently on its door.

They bent over the

palanquin, Kirit forgotten.

"Parvati," called Kirit from his position on the ground. "Are you there?"

"Ye-yes," came the answer very faintly from somewhere behind.

"Come and untie my arms," said Kirit. Parvati crawled up beside him. He groaned with the effort but managed to untie Kirit's hands. Kirit rushed silently upon the robbers who were still screaming, "Open up". He felled Raghu to the ground and Parvati managed to knock Bilu off his feet too. Then they plumped down upon the two greasy bodies so as to stop them from getting up.

Just then, the door of the palanquin opened from inside.

A lady stepped out—pale and fair, in a long gown with lace collar and frilled cuffs. In that instant, she reminded Kirit of ladies in the television serial he had been watching of late: *Vanity Fair*. She looked exactly like an Englishwoman of that bygone era.

But this was no time to wonder about the lady's dress. All four on the ground—even the two robbers—had frozen at the sight of what she had in her hand—a gun, a quaint-looking long-

handled sort.

"Don't move," she said in broken Hindi. "If anything should happen to me, my husband will see to it that you get caught. The District Magistrate of Birbhum, that is what he is."

"O'Brien *saab*?" said Bilu, still pinned to the ground by Parvati Charan.

"He had warned me earlier that this stretch of Birbhum was infested with dacoits. But what could I do? At the moment he is at Calcutta and I just got the message that I have to reach there as soon as possible and board the next ship that sails from Kidderpur (the dock at Calcutta). My little boy is sick," her voice trembled. "He's at home—at Eton—and I must go and nurse him..."

"But *memsaab*, we have heard there is a whole sea between Hindustan and *vilayat* (England)," said Raghu, lying stiff under Kirit who himself sat stiff with wonder and fright.

"Yes, and the next ship sails in two days' time. That's why, I started out from Suri the instant I got the news, even though the evening had already fallen. Anyway, now that I'm here, you are not going to stop me from

getting to poor David.
Don't you try!"

But the gun had begun to shake in her hand and she was clearly tired and strained.

How long would it work as a threat to Raghu and Bilu? Kirit wondered.

"My little boy, all alone there while here I am with his father who's trying to run your country for you!" The lady's voice broke. "He's about your size," she said, looking at Parvati.

With a sudden thrust, Raghu threw Kirit off his body. Bilu too sprung up with Parvati Charan still hanging on to him. BANG! The gun went off but the bullet went absolutely off its mark. None of them was hurt.

"Listen, *memsaab*, put away your gun," said Raghu in a mild voice. "You boys, you too stop pestering us. *Memsaab*, we won't stop you; we'll let you go. Only—"

"Yes, yes," she said eagerly. "Take all my jewels—everything that I am carrying—but let me go!"

"No, *memsaab*, dacoits too are human beings," said Raghu. "What I wanted to say was that don't turn us in at the next *thana* (police station) you reach on your way to

Calcutta."

"How can I?" said the lady. "By the time I trudge up to the next village, there won't be a trace of you here!"

"You are not getting me," said Raghu. "We're going to carry you ourselves till you reach a locality where you can get new palanquin-bearers or change to a bullock cart."

The lady stared.

"*Memsaab*," Bilu finished for Raghu, "we have caused you delay, and, on top of it, we have made your palanquin-bearers run away. Now if you have to travel on foot, you will never catch that ship

of yours. So we'll be taking you ourselves."

"We'll run—in order to make up for the lost time."

"Oh, what wonderful people you really are!" the lady burst out.

Kirit noticed that Parvati Charan was slowly sinking to his feet. He came forward and put his arms around him. Then he turned to the lady and said, "Please, ma'am, can you take this boy along with you in the palanquin? He's all but dead, but if he gets a doctor to look at him, he'll have a chance."

The lady looked over Kirit curiously. "How is it



that you speak English and are in trousers?" she asked.

Without answering her directly, Kirit pressed on with his request. "Ma'am, please take the poor fellow along!"

"Of course, I will; he's just my David's height," said the lady. "But how has he come to such a sorry pass?"

Raghu and Bilu hung back, silent. Kirit did the explaining as best as he could. "But you two—you who can do this to him," the lady pointed at Ravi and said to the tongue-tied robbers, "why do you want to come to my aid?"

"The thing is that when we attack a passing palanquin, we don't know who the victim is going to be. We just charge," said Bilu.

"And *mamsaab*," said Raghu, "you see, you somehow remind me of my sister. She had come to us on a short visit to her *baper-barri* (parents' place). But the news came that back at her *sasur-bari* (in-laws' place), her son had been bitten by a snake. She hurried back immediately, and we hurried out with her. But it was all over before she reached. She didn't even get to see him alive."

"Oh, no," said the lady.

"Well, I know what my sister went through and I won't make you go through the same thing," said Raghu.

"As for this kid," said Bilu, "we need his money, but not his life. We don't mind carrying him as well."

"He too was going to Bolpur," said Kirit to the lady. "It will be a favour if you drop him at the Chattopadhyays' place in Bolpur. I'm sure they will take care of the rest. He's... well... their prospective son-in-law."

"We must do something about the child-marriages that take place in this country!" the lady exclaimed.

"Come on, let us hurry", said Raghu. "Half the night is over."

"True enough," said the lady and got back into the palanquin. Kirit helped Parvati Charan in. "Get well soon," he whispered to the wan face and closed eyelids.

"What about this fellow here?" said Bilu to Raghu. "Where, in the first place, did he come from?"

"Oh, let that be," said Raghu. "Let's start."

"Yes," said Bilu. "The clouds are gathering again." It was true. The

stars were lost again.

With a great shout of "Hei-yo-ho", the two robbers raised the palanquin on their shoulders. They began to move ahead into the darkness.

"Hey, don't leave me alone," screamed Kirit. "I don't know the way. Wait for me!"

He looked around wildly for his bike. Raghu and Bilu did not stop.

Forgetting about the bicycle, Kirit ran after them, stumbling and falling. And then there was a tremendous flash of lightning—searing him, blinding him. Then, seconds later, there was a rumble in the high heavens, shaking him head to foot. Kirit fell down and just lay there.

When he came to, he had aches and pains all over and felt like lying there for ever. He could hear birds twitter and saw the sky above, pink and flushed. There were two white lines across the sky, the trails of a jet that had just flown by. As Kirit saw them, he felt relief surging back into himself. No, it could not have happened, all that drama last night, with palanquin and robbers, a child-bridegroom and an English lady.

To travel into the past—to be shunted back into early 19th century Bengal, was impossible. It could not be anything else. Could it?

His cycle! Ah, there it was, fallen across the black roots of an ancient palm tree. Kirit hobbled towards it, and then his eyes fell on his own body. Why, it was so greasy! But where could the grease have come from—except from Raghu and Bilu? And then, it must all have been true, his queer experience! Somehow, with the flash of lightning, he had been transported to the past—into the British Raj. And recalled again into the present by another powerful flash. Or, perhaps, sometimes history repeated itself, say, on stormy nights very like the one in which the original event took place.

Perhaps, but how could he be sure? "I suppose there is no way!" said Kirit and got on to his cycle and pushed away towards Bolpur.

A search-party of teachers and fellow-students that had set out to hunt for him, and it met him halfway across. At first there was just laughter at his strange tale. But then someone remembered.

Why, the *dharmashala* at Bolpur, where the excursion team from his school was putting up, was named Parvati Nivas! It was the oldest building in the town, and the local people had mentioned that it had been established in late 19th century by one Parvati Charan Mukhopadhyaya. It was said that as a child Parvati Charan had been waylaid by robbers in the stretch of land beyond

Bolpur. He had had a chance escape from death and in thanksgiving, had founded the Parvati Nivas when he had grown up. It had provided great relief to wayworn travellers, especially since it took the British government a long time to purge the district of Birbhum of its dacoits.

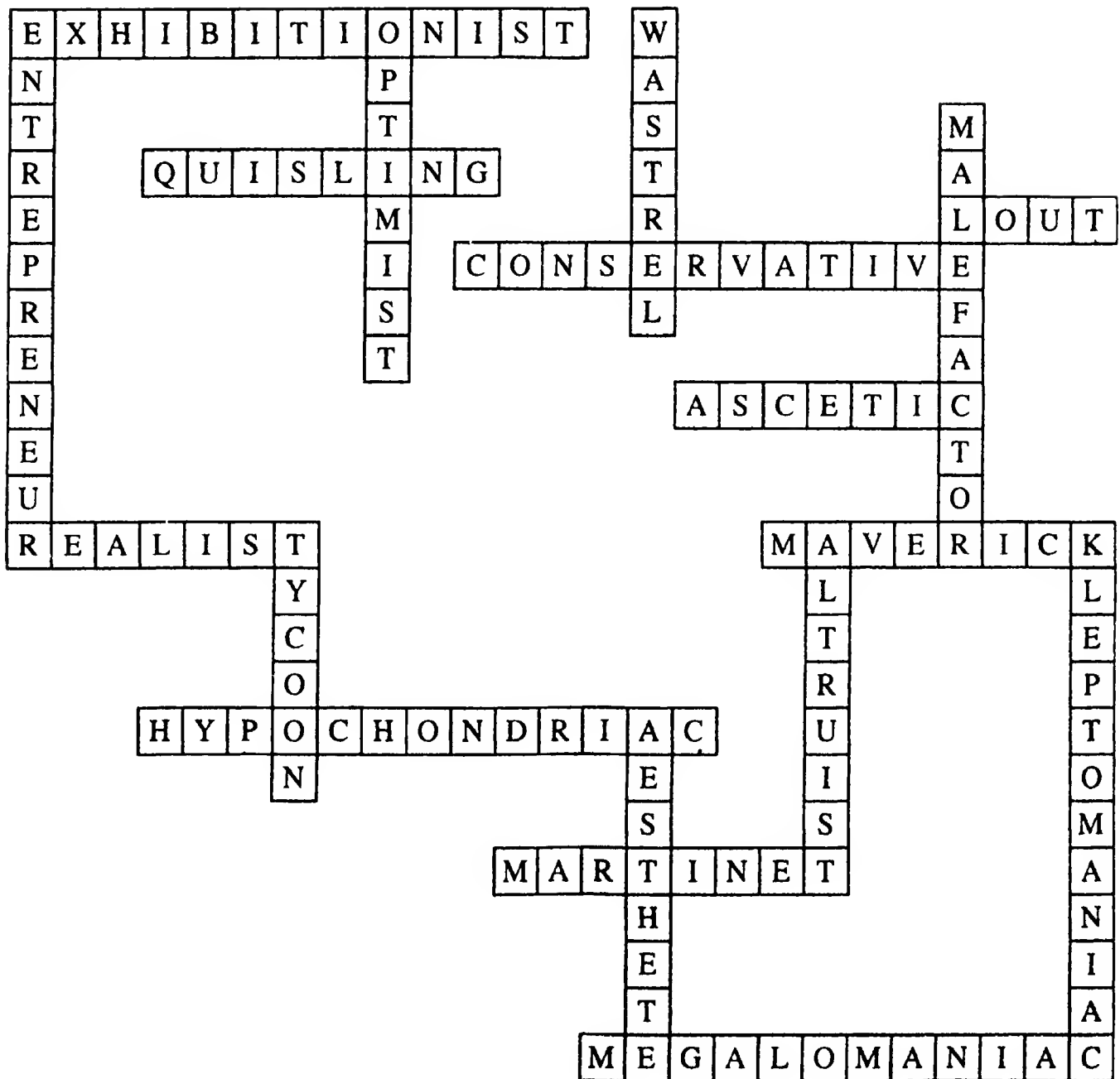
"Good of you, Parvati!" said Kirit to the thin air. "And I'm glad you did recover. I hope David did the same!"



ANSWERS TO CROSSROADS 3

Personally Yours

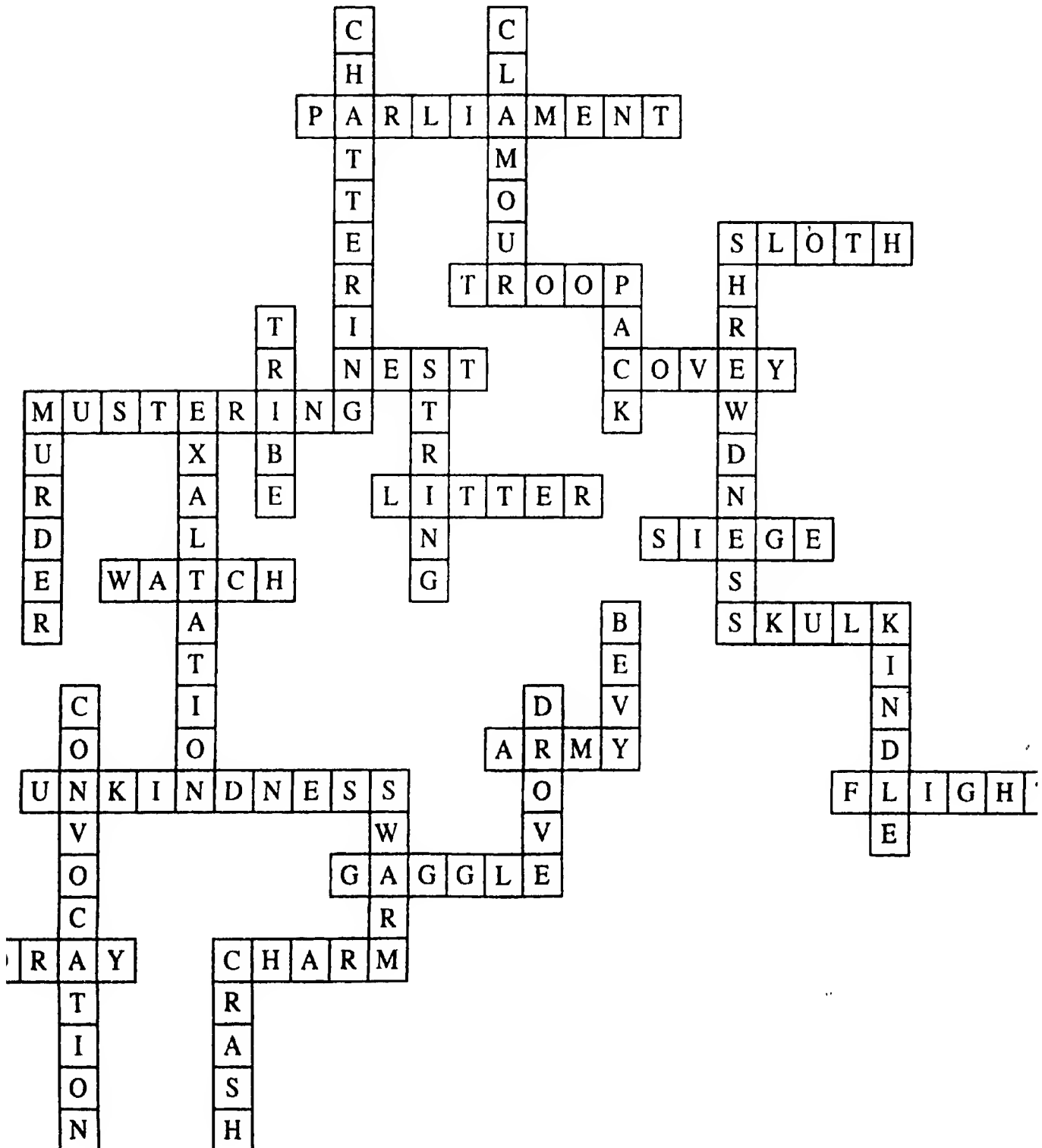
(March 1996)



ANSWERS TO CROSSROADS 4

Collectively Yours

(April 1996)



Smallest, largest, tallest...

COME LET'S FLY

Illustrations: Beejee

Man has always been fascinated by the ability of birds to fly and has constantly tried to emulate them. Balloons, gliders, airships—you name it, he has tried it. And ever since Wilbur and Oliver Wright invented the world's first successful aeroplane in 1903, travelling has not been the same. From balloons to jets has been a swift journey, with air travel becoming commonplace today. Leave alone air, it is pretty common to travel

in space these days, in increasingly sophisticated and technologically advanced spacecraft.

Here is some aircraft trivia for you:

Did you know that the **first** aircraft **Flyer** designed by the Wright brothers travelled 37 m at about 48 km per hour? The first flight took place in Kitty Hawk in the U.S. and lasted just about 12 seconds! The plane was made of wood covered with cloth and joined by wires. The wings of the

plane were supported by braces.

The **world's first aircraft with an all-metal body was the Junkers J1**, built in Germany in 1915. It also had cantilever wings, which meant that the wings were supported by an internal framework instead of external braces as in the earlier models.

As early as the 1500's, the Italian artist **Leonardo da Vinci** made the drawings of flying machines which had

flapping wings. One could therefore call him the first aircraft designer.

Charles A. Lindbergh made the first solo non-stop transatlantic flight in 1929. He flew 5810 kms from New York to Paris in 33½ hours.

Today, the **fastest** aeroplanes are **Rocket aeroplanes** that can travel faster than 7240 km per hour. These are mainly used for research though.

The **Lockheed SR 71 A** is a jet propelled aircraft, used by the U.S. Air Force and can fly at a speed of more than 3200 km per hour.

Supersonic aircraft fly faster than sound. Though the speed of sound is 1225 km per hour at sea level, at an altitude of 12,000 m it declines to 1060 km per hour. Once planes reached that speed, they faced an impassable 'sound barrier', with the air in front of the planes piled up in shock waves that caused severe problems for the pilot. It was only in 1947 that the U.S. **Bell X-1** rocket planes made the first supersonic flight. The world's **first supersonic transport aircraft—Tupolev TU-144** was flown in 1968 by Russia.

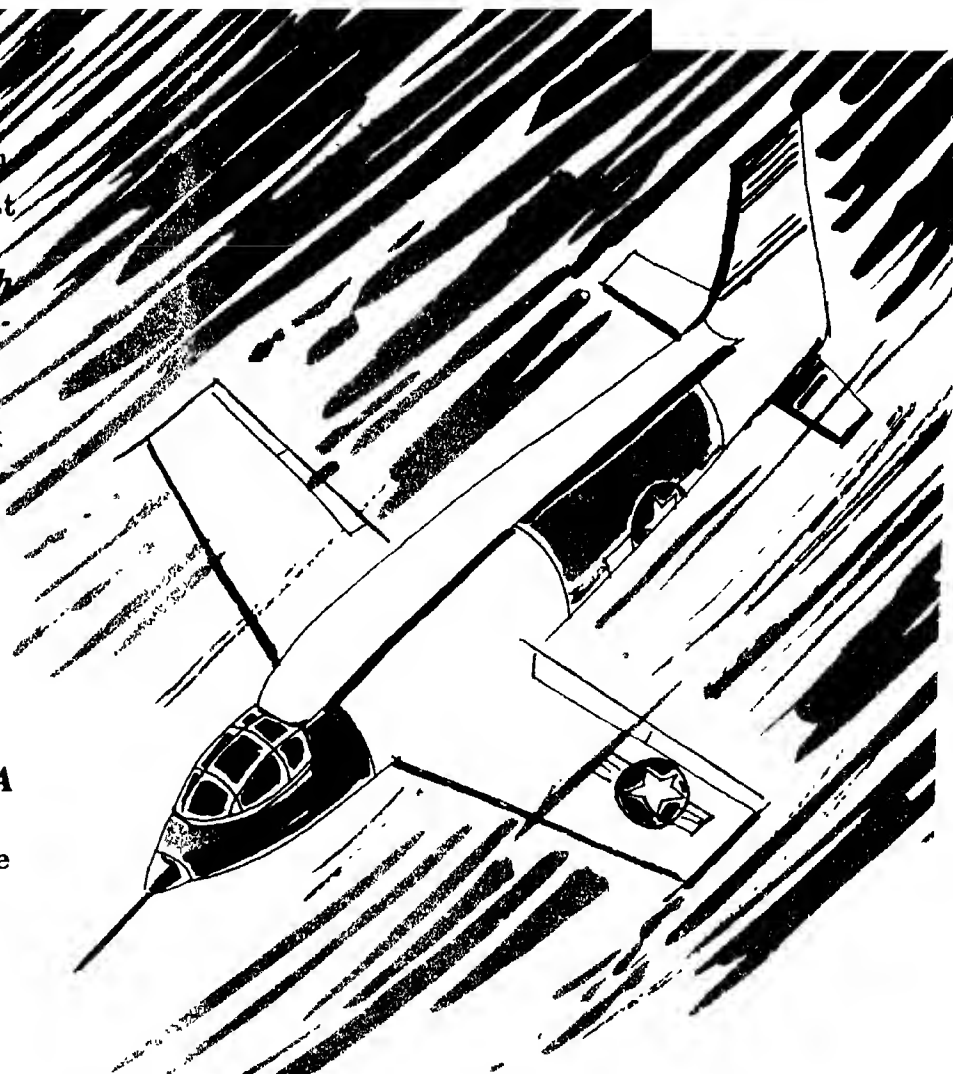
Concord is the world's only **supersonic airliner**. It carries 120 passengers at a speed of 2000 km an hour.

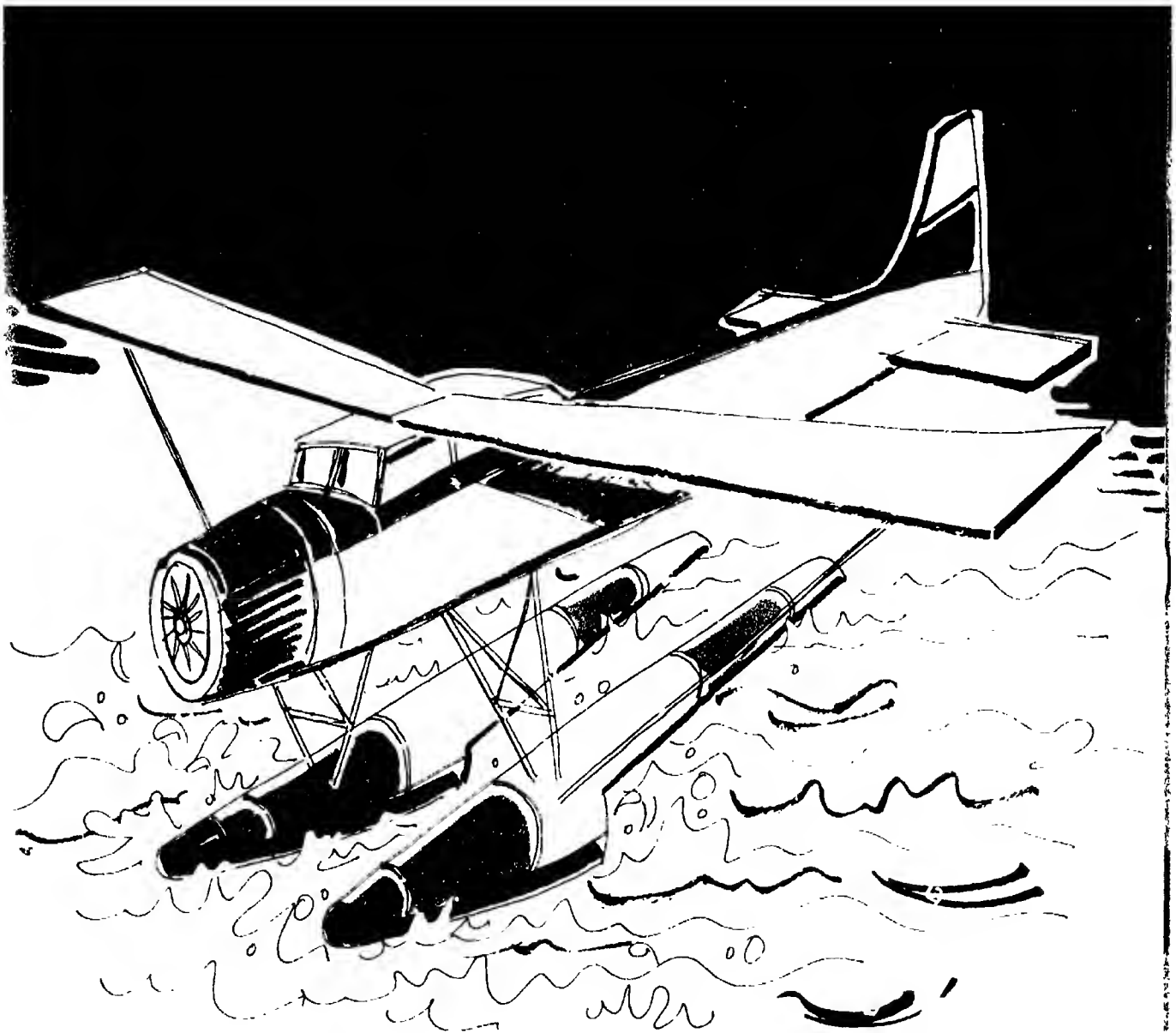
The world's **first vertical take off and landing** was made by **Convair KFY-1**, of the U.S. Navy in 1954. Such aircraft are called V/TOL (Vertical/Take-off and Landing). Others called V/STOL (Vertical/Short Take-off and Landing) aircraft need less than 150 m of runway. Conventional aeroplanes need 10 times as long a runway.

These aircraft are used for military purposes by the navy, to land and take off on board aircraft carriers.

In terms of the number of passengers, the **Boeing 747** can carry a maximum number of about 500 people. Its all-cargo model can carry 90 metric tonnes of cargo over more than 6400 km non-stop.

The lightest aircraft in terms of weight are the **ultralights and microlights**. They weigh just 120 kg. Yet these mini-marvels have flown at heights of 7900 m at





speeds of 290 km per hour. Microlights are flown mainly by hobbyists and sports enthusiasts. Vijaypat Singhania of India made a flying record when he flew his microlight aircraft around the world a few years ago.

Seaplanes can land and take off on water. Some of these are used to fight forest fires. They land on a lake, fill up as much as 3800 litres of

water into their tanks, fly to the fires and spray the water on them. They have floats instead of wheels for landing on water.

An **Airship** is an aircraft that is lighter than air, which is kept airborne by a large volume of lighter-than-air gas like hydrogen. They had engines and steering equipment and were hence used for passenger transport during the

1930s. During World War I, they were used for bombing and protecting submarines. Their use as a means of transporting passengers ended after a series of disasters resulting in loss of many lives. Today they are mainly used as advertisement floats.

*Compiled by
Thangamani*

Letter by Letter

By Reader of the month: Bhavana Nair

You must have come across different kinds of letters. There are the stiff and pompous-sounding ones (...This is to inform you...), the long and boring ones (...How are you? I am fine...It's hot here...How is the weather there...Hope Aunt and Uncle...are fine...Yawn!), the brief and hurried ones (...I reached here safely... will write later), so on and so forth. However, the letters that everyone loves receiving are surely the chatty, humorous ones that you can read over and over again. If you do not know how to write such a one, Jerusha Abbott's letters in *Daddy-Long-Legs* will tell you how.

At 17, Jerusha is the oldest inmate of the John Grier Home, an orphanage. She would have had an uneventful life but for the benevolence of one of the Home's trustees who is willing to put her through college to make

her a writer. "...In return, you will write a letter of acknowledgement once a month...telling of the progress in your studies and the details of your daily life...they are the only payment that Mr. Smith requires, so you must be as punctilious in sending them as though it were a bill that you were paying..." Jerusha is told.

College is an entirely novel experience, a new life for Jerusha who has never set foot outside the orphanage as such. Her first letter to her benefactor begins thus: "Dear Kind-Trustee-Who-Sends-Orphans-to-College... College is the biggest, most bewildering place... Before leaving yesterday... Mrs. Lippett... told me how to behave... towards the kind gentleman who is doing so much for me. I must take care to be Very Respectful.

"But how can one be very respectful to a person who wishes to be called

John Smith? Why couldn't you have picked out a name with a little personality? I might as well write letters to Dear Hitching-Post or Dear Clothes-Pole.

"...I've decided to call you Dear Daddy-Long-Legs..."

Jerusha is determined to enjoy every bit of college life whether it is studies or play. She realizes she knows far less than her classmates and is in a hurry to gather the required knowledge. "...You wouldn't believe, Daddy, what an abyss of ignorance my mind is... The things that most girls with a properly assorted family and a home and friends and a library know by absorption, I have never heard of...I never read "Mother Goose" or "David Copperfield" or "Ivanhoe" or "Cinderella" ...I didn't know that people used to be monkeys...Now I know all these things and a lot of others besides, but you

can see how much I need to catch up. And oh, but it's fun..."

In another letter she writes, "I've made the basketball team and you ought to see the bruise on my left shoulder..."

Jerusha's observations of the people around her is amusing. Two girls who have rooms in the same tower as she are Sallie McBride and Julia Rutledge Pendleton. Of them she writes, "Sallie is the most entertaining person in the world—and Julia Rutledge Pendleton the least so... Sallie thinks everything is funny...and Julia is bored at everything...She believes if you are a Pendleton, that fact alone admits you to heaven without any further examination..."

A further comment on Julia's exalted lineage. "...Julia Pendleton...got started on the subject of family and I couldn't switch her off. She wanted to know what my mother's maiden name was...Her mother was a Rutherford. The family came over in the ark ...On her father's side they date back further than Adam. On the topmost branches of her family tree there's supe-

rior breed of monkeys, with very fine silky hair and extra long tails..."

Never once does Jerusha forget that but for the trustee's benevolence she would still have been at the orphanage. Though never bitter about the days spent at the John Grier Home, some things have cut deep. "...You've never heard about my clothes, have you, Daddy? Six dresses, all new and beautiful and bought for me—not handed down from somebody bigger. Perhaps you don't realize what a climax that marks in the career of an orphan...You can't know how I dreaded appearing in school in those miserable poor-box dresses. The bitterness of wearing... cast-off clothes cuts into your soul. If I wore silk stockings for the rest of my life, I don't believe I could obliterate the scar..."

There is also the philosopher in Jerusha. "...it isn't the big troubles in life that require character. Anybody can rise to a crisis and face a crushing tragedy with courage, but to meet the petty hazards of the day with a laugh—I really think that requires spirit.

"It's the kind of character I am going to develop. I am going to pretend that all life is just a game which I must play as skillfully and fairly as I can. If I lose, I am going to shrug my shoulders and laugh—also if I win..."

Letter by letter, in various moods, Jerusha Abbott stands revealed before us, as she writes of her progress in studies, her attempts at becoming an author, her unsuccessful tries at eliciting a letter from her benefactor, her joys, fears, her liking of and friendship with Sallie's elder brother, Jimmie McBride, and Julia's uncle, Jervis Pendleton, her love for one of them, and her long-cherished meeting with the trustee who put her through college.

Jerusha's letters are enlivened by her explanatory sketches. Not great drawings, they do add character to her letters. Try it in your next letter.

Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*, published in 1912, reportedly, sold 100,000 copies in its first year and has never been out of print. Need anything more be said about the merit of the book?

'A Friendship Toy for a Cuban Child'

A report by Vaijayanti Tonpe

Photographs courtesy: Springdales School

HAVE you ever tried to measure the joy each toy you get gives you? Of course not—when you get it you are too busy examining it, playing with it, *testing* it to think of joy or happiness! Only the person who loves you enough to gift it to you, has the pleasure of enjoying or measuring the joy and excitement the toy brings you. Some Indian children, especially Delhi children, will now have the chance of experiencing the joy of *giving a toy* away to another child. In fact 2.5 million children are to receive toys—collected, made or donated by Indian children. This unique project has been inspired by the National Committee for Solidarity with Cuba, and it is the Cuban children—who have for long suffered

because of lack of food, clothes and toys—who are to be the recipients.

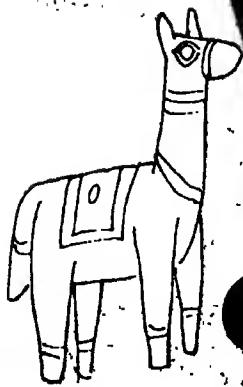
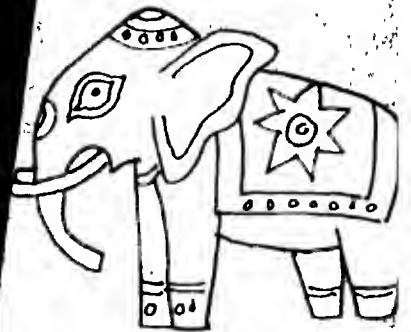
The project was formally launched at a colourful function on April 8, 1996 at the Hall of Friendship auditorium of Springdales School, Dhaula Kuan, by Her Excellency, Ms. Olga Chamero Trias, the Ambassador for Cuba in India. Madame Trias is also the convenor of the project. She received the first toy of the project (*See facing page*) from the children of Springdales School, who along with the children of Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Bluebells School and the Ryan International School, presented a cultural show that morning. Aably supporting this noble sentiment of sharing the joy of giving away toys to Cuban children, with a

speech, song, and an enlightening talk on their visit to Cuba in 1978 were Mr. M.A. Baby, Member of Parliament, Sushmit Bose (who sang Jose Marti's evergreen poem "Guantanamo") to an enthusiastic, foot-tapping and clapping audience) and Vivan Sundaram.

Indian children do not merely propose to "collect" these 2.5 million toys, but also to "make" some of them in the traditional Indian folk toys style too, at workshops organised specially for this purpose, where eminent artists like Vivan Sundaram, have promised to lend a helping hand.

These toys will be presented to the children of Cuba on the occasion of the Cuban Children's Day which is on July 26.

A FRIENDSHIP TOY FOR A CUBAN CHILD



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CHILDREN'S WORLD



AUGUST 1996
Vol. XXIX
No.5



INDIA, MY INDIA

Joe George

MIDNIGHT MISCHIEF

Story

Madhavi Mahadevan

TIME

Poem

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla

THE 'MONKEY BRIGADE'

Interview

T. Mani

THE TREASURE OF KUMBHER

Serial

Krishna Narayan

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TALES OF THE UNKNOWN

Book review

AIDS TO EDUCATION

Toyland

O.P. Bhagat

PEN FRIENDS



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India celebrates its 49th anniversary of freedom on August 15th this year, and one wonders why there must be such a fuss over an event that is years and years older than any one of us. It is not surprising that the nation's freedom and its struggle for independence pales into insignificance in the present times. As a 'now' generation, we are overly preoccupied with the encroachment of our own spaces. So much so that our sense of loss of freedom extends from claustrophobia at being in the elevator a moment too long, to having to listen to somebody's speech for over two minutes. Not surprising then that we choose to stuff our long freedom struggle into the back corners of our history books, and prefer to switch channels on TV when the nation's freedom fighters choose to reminisce about their struggles in the days before independence. If this makes us, the 'now' people, sound insensitive then that too we know is not quite true. Even if we do tend to take our independent status for granted, no one can deny that these 49 years have seen the best of

contributions being made in every field to add to the glory of the nation. And what better way to celebrate independence than to reinforce the positive character of a nation's identity?

If there is anything that has been recorded in the annals of history about the Indian freedom struggle and the character of its people, then it is the fact that we as a nation feel "Swaraj is my birthright"—and we shall always have it.

For, the Indian heart, like that of any self-respecting, nation-loving heart, yearns for the poetic freedom of wanting to fly and sing like a bird which, in essence, would mean, going about one's way of life without hindrance—respecting another person's territory only because one values one's own.

So, for all those of the older generation who despaired that today's children do not spill into the streets with cries of "*Jhanda ooncha rahe hamara*" and so on and so forth, may do well to follow the nation's youth into the quiet bylanes in which they softly tread—using the hard-earned freedom won by their parents and grandparents

to shift gears and steer the country into the fast lane of the 21st century. Not necessarily only through their computer consoles or by satellites or space probes alone, but also by using their two eyes and ears, their hands and legs, their sensitive minds and souls to alleviate their suffering of those less fortunate than themselves—so that the ultimate freedom of mankind—the dignity of the soul is not altogether wiped out from the face of humanity. For a nation's independence, its glory, its place among other nations rests largely on the happiness and sense of freedom that the community within enjoys. In turn, the community's freedom and glory are dependent on those of the families that make it up and that of the family, on the individuals within that family. That, come to think of it, means it is *our* 49th independence birthday we will be celebrating on August 15 this year—ours—yours and mine! Let us make the most of this family occasion then. Happy reading and flag hoisting and, as always, three cheers for our independent nation...

Editor



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India, my India !

Illustrations: Beejee

Dear John,

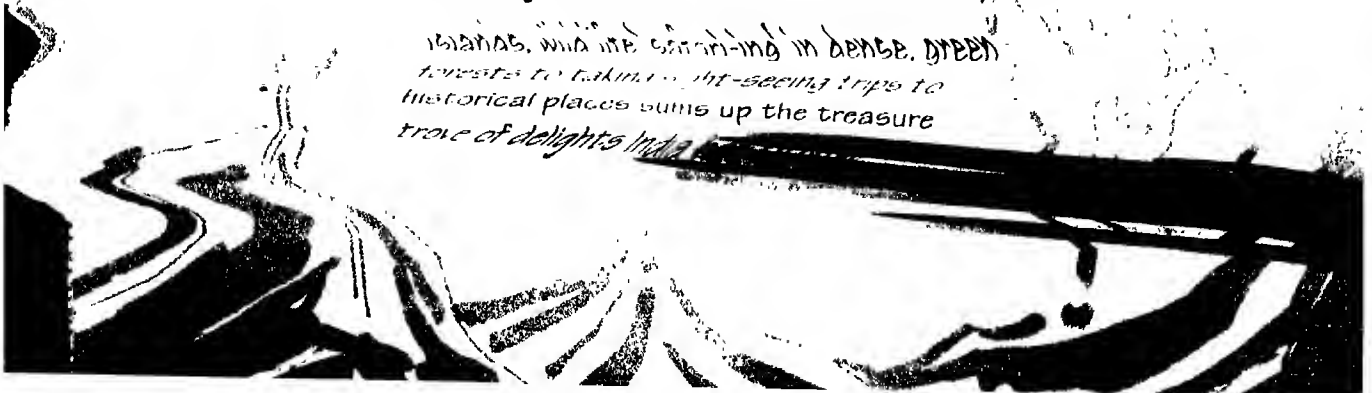
I am happy to know that you are feeling better and are back at school. Although we are pen pals and we have seen each other, you have not visited my hallowed country, India. Do you remember that I had visited yours during the Europe tour? Frankly, I feel that you ought to know the pleasures of this wonderful land, my country.

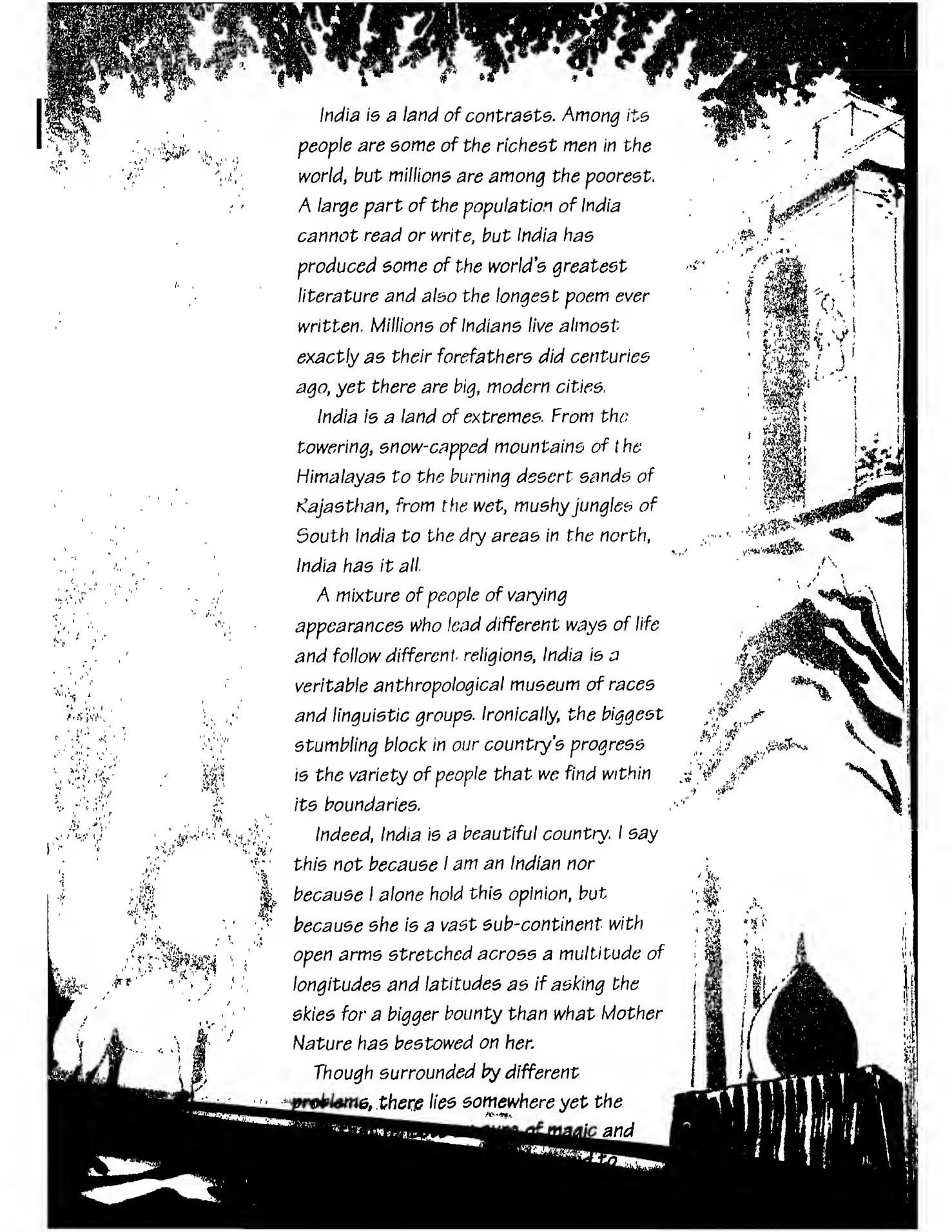
Have you heard the slogan, 'Mera Bharat Mahan'? You may find it difficult to understand this phrase. But yes, my Bharat is 'mahan', my India is great. And what makes her outstandingly great? Is it her sheer size, is it the pleasant air that wakes you up with its sweet smell, or the flowers that hold the morning dew? Is it her mountains, or is it just the pure pleasure of getting up with all the animals, from elephants to ants?

Oh yes, this and much, much more. If you're looking for a place where heaven has descended to earth, then certainly, India is your destination.

Skiing down the mighty Himalayas to snorkelling in azure blue waters of coral

islands, with me swimming in dense green forests to taking sight-seeing trips to historical places sums up the treasure trove of delights India has to offer.





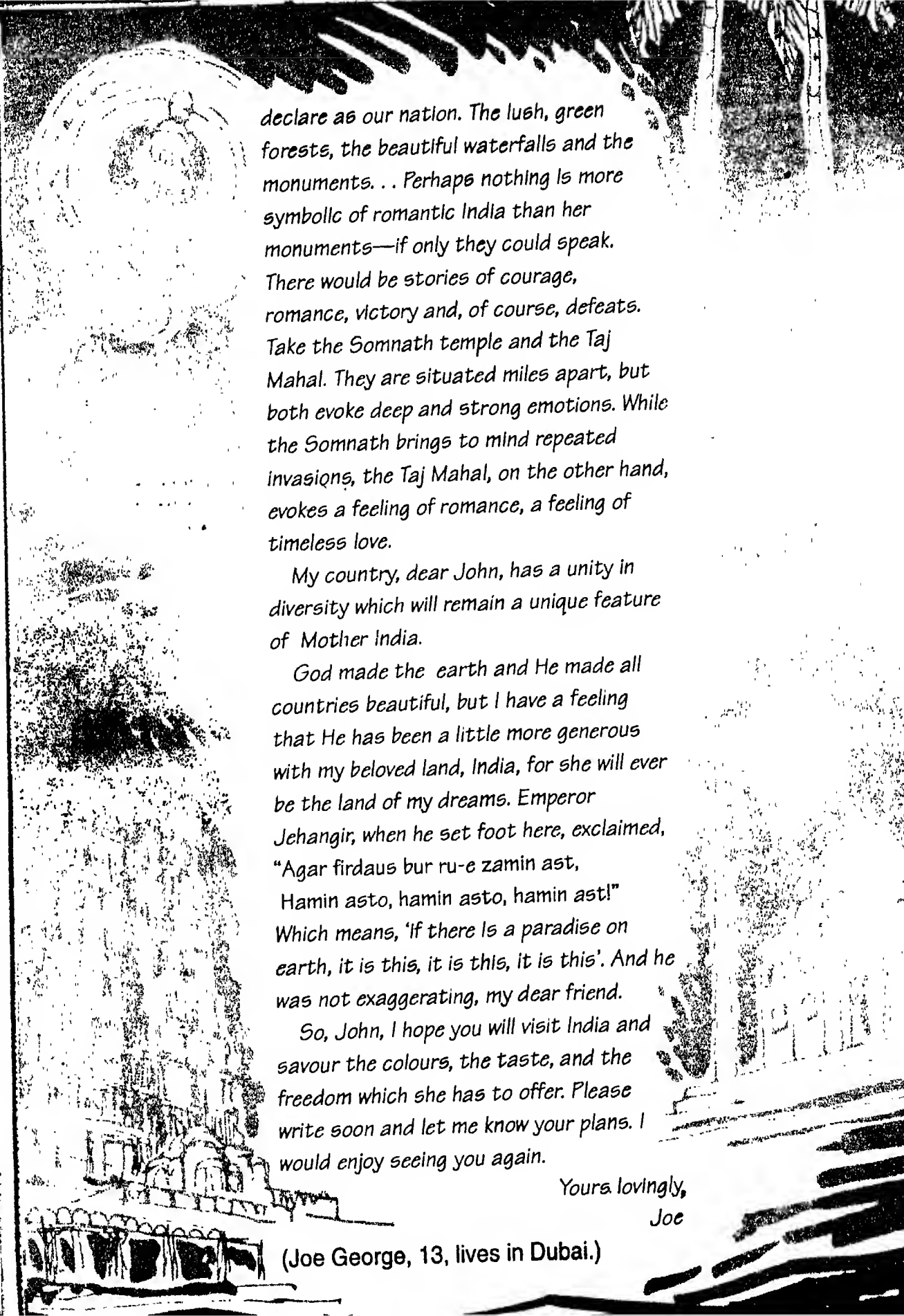
India is a land of contrasts. Among its people are some of the richest men in the world, but millions are among the poorest. A large part of the population of India cannot read or write, but India has produced some of the world's greatest literature and also the longest poem ever written. Millions of Indians live almost exactly as their forefathers did centuries ago, yet there are big, modern cities.

India is a land of extremes. From the towering, snow-capped mountains of the Himalayas to the burning desert sands of Rajasthan, from the wet, mushy jungles of South India to the dry areas in the north, India has it all.

A mixture of people of varying appearances who lead different ways of life and follow different religions, India is a veritable anthropological museum of races and linguistic groups. Ironically, the biggest stumbling block in our country's progress is the variety of people that we find within its boundaries.

Indeed, India is a beautiful country. I say this not because I am an Indian nor because I alone hold this opinion, but because she is a vast sub-continent with open arms stretched across a multitude of longitudes and latitudes as if asking the skies for a bigger bounty than what Mother Nature has bestowed on her.

Though surrounded by different problems, there lies somewhere yet the source of magic and



declare as our nation. The lush, green forests, the beautiful waterfalls and the monuments. . . Perhaps nothing is more symbolic of romantic India than her monuments—if only they could speak. There would be stories of courage, romance, victory and, of course, defeats. Take the Somnath temple and the Taj Mahal. They are situated miles apart, but both evoke deep and strong emotions. While the Somnath brings to mind repeated invasions, the Taj Mahal, on the other hand, evokes a feeling of romance, a feeling of timeless love.

My country, dear John, has a unity in diversity which will remain a unique feature of Mother India.

God made the earth and He made all countries beautiful, but I have a feeling that He has been a little more generous with my beloved land, India, for she will ever be the land of my dreams. Emperor Jehangir, when he set foot here, exclaimed, "Agar firdaus bur ru-e zamin ast, Hamin asto, hamin asto, hamin ast!" Which means, 'if there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this'. And he was not exaggerating, my dear friend.

So, John, I hope you will visit India and savour the colours, the taste, and the freedom which she has to offer. Please write soon and let me know your plans. I would enjoy seeing you again.

*Yours lovingly,
Joe*

(Joe George, 13, lives in Dubai.)

**Story: Madhavi
Mahadevan
Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdh**

ONE DAY in early April of 1663, a wedding procession reached the gates of Pune.

"Halt!" ordered the Mughal soldier on duty. "Where is your permit to enter the city?"

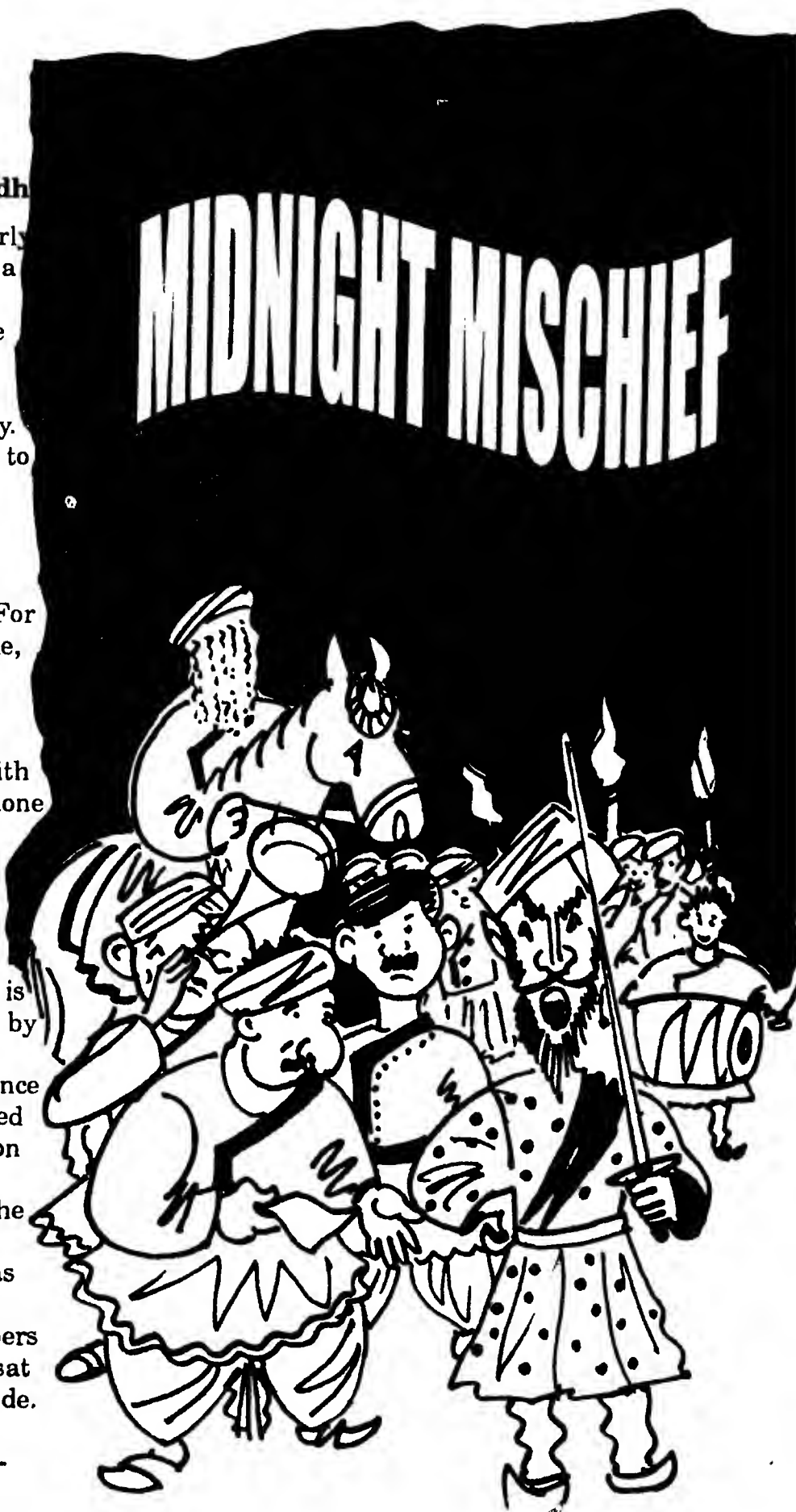
The villagers who formed the procession seemed awed by his manner and bearing. For a moment no one spoke, then an elderly man hesitantly stepped forward. "*Huzoor*," he said, "I have it here with me. It was signed by none other than the *Kotwal Sahib*."

The entry snorted. "Don't you know that under the new orders each and every permit is scrutinized and signed by the *Kotwal*?"

He threw a brief glance at the permit and jerked his head in the direction of the guard room.

"Go and show it to the *Mansabdar*," he said.

While the permit was being examined in the guard room, the members of the marriage party sat patiently by the roadside. The bridegroom, a strapping sixteen-year-



old, looked uncomfortable in his new wedding clothes. He got off his horse and stretched out on the grass below a *neem* tree.

One of the men in the party struck up a conversation with the sentry. In very respectful tones he asked, "*Huzoor*, why do you have so many rules and permits for those who want to enter the city? It makes things very complicated for simple people like us."

The sentry gave him a disdainful look. "There is somebody very important in the city these days," he said. "Something is about to happen."

"I see soldiers everywhere, *huzoor*," the villager went on. "Who is this important man? What is going on?"

"How is it that you don't know what the whole world knows?" the sentry asked. Rather loftily he enlightened the man. "The *Amir* is in the city."

"*Amir*?" repeated the villager. He looked completely blank.

"Yes the *Amir-ul-amara* Shaista Khan. Surely, you've heard of him?" the soldier said. "He is the uncle of our *Shahenshah* Aurangzeb."

"But why is he here?" another villager asked. He looked more bewildered than impressed.

'Yokels!' the sentry thought. "They know nothing."

"The *Amir* is here on a special mission," he said in a pompous voice. "He is here to defeat Shivaji."

"Shivaji!"

At the mention of this name most of the gathering looked interested. This irritated the sentry. He was even more annoyed when someone asked, "Can anyone defeat Shivaji?"

"Certainly!" the sentry retorted. "Our army has captured his forts. At this very moment your great Shivaji hides in the hills. A fugitive without a kingdom. He does not even hold his home any more. An *Amir* lives in it. In grand style, let me tell you."

A shout from the guard room interrupted the sentry. "Let them pass. Their permit is in order."

The procession picked itself up. The musicians gathered their pipes, kettle drums and *dholaks*. A gay, festive tune rose in the air as the men filed in through the big gate and melted into the crowd and

hubbub of the city.

★

In the heart of Pune stood a palatial house. It was unusually well guarded. The *Amir-ul-amara* was in residence. Behind its neat exterior, the *Amir's* household was quietly busy. It was the month of Ramzan. Shaista Khan, a devout Muslim, was at his prayers. In the *baithak*, the *Kotwal Sahib*, chief of the city's police, waited for an audience. A curtain parted. The *Amir* emerged. The *Kotwal* bowed low with due respect and murmured, "*As-salaam-aleikum, huzoor*."

"What news do you have for me?" Shaista Khan asked. He was a tall, broad man with a grim, battle-scarred face. He was a trusted general in the Mughal army. A man used to command. A man who had won many battles and was known and respected for his bravery and loyalty to Aurangzeb.

"We have tightened the security in and around the city," the *Kotwal* reported. "Except those who are in the Imperial service, no Maratha can enter or leave the city without a permit."

The *Amir* waited for more.

"We have also enforced a new rule. No Maratha in the Imperial service is allowed to own a horse. Our army has only Maratha foot soldiers in it," the *Kotwal* continued. "The gates of the city are guarded day and night."

"Make sure that the sentries are alert and wide awake at all times," the *Amir* warned. "Our enemy is very wily. He cannot take on the might of the Mughal army in an open battle. So he has chosen a clever, simple strategy—guerilla warfare. By this he succeeds in making us the laughing stock of the world. He demoralizes our troops. And his legend grows."

As he spoke the *Amir's* thoughts went back to the hard and bitter campaign of the past years. Ostensibly the Imperial forces had captured the Maratha chieftain Shivaji's forts and succeeded in driving him into the hills. But Shivaji had proved to be a persistent thorn in their flesh. The Marathas were a hardy race. They lived in their saddles. They knew every inch of the surrounding hills. For the Mughal army the western

ghats were an inhospitable terrain—rugged, unfamiliar and full of hidden dangers. To make it worse the army itself was colossal. The Mughal fighting forces in the Deccan numbered a hundred and seventy thousand, apart from the camp-followers. They had to drag huge cannons up and down the hills for months on end. And they never knew when Shivaji's men would descend on them in a surprise attack. Looting, killing, creating confusion. And then melting away into the hills as quickly as they had appeared. The *Amir* knew that he could not rest till Shivaji was brought to his knees. While waiting for the monsoon to be over so that he could resume battle, the *Amir* and the army were taking a much needed rest.

★

A sudden commotion in the market place cut through Shaista Khan's train of thought. He looked out of a window. A group of bare-headed, handcuffed prisoners were being escorted away by a posse of soldiers.

"Who are these men?" the *Amir* asked.

"Some of Shivaji's soldiers were caught in a skirmish, a few miles out of the city," replied the *Kotwal*. "A party of foot soldiers were sent to bring them in."

The *Amir* nodded. "Make an example of them," he ordered. The *Kotwal* bowed out of this presence.

By nightfall the streets of Pune were deserted and silent. The dusk-to-dawn curfew had begun. The only sounds to be heard were the regular, rhythmic footsteps of sentries patrolling the city.

Outside the quarter-guard that housed the prisoners, the sentry on duty was sound asleep. His dinner that night had been unusually rich and heavy. He had eaten well. But that alone was not the reason why he was asleep. A strong drug had been mixed into the food without his knowledge.

At a pre-arranged signal—the hoot of an owl repeated thrice—shadows crept silently and swiftly along the wall of the quarter guard. A hand reached out to remove the key from the hook on the wall, above the sleeping sentry. A door was noiselessly opened. The

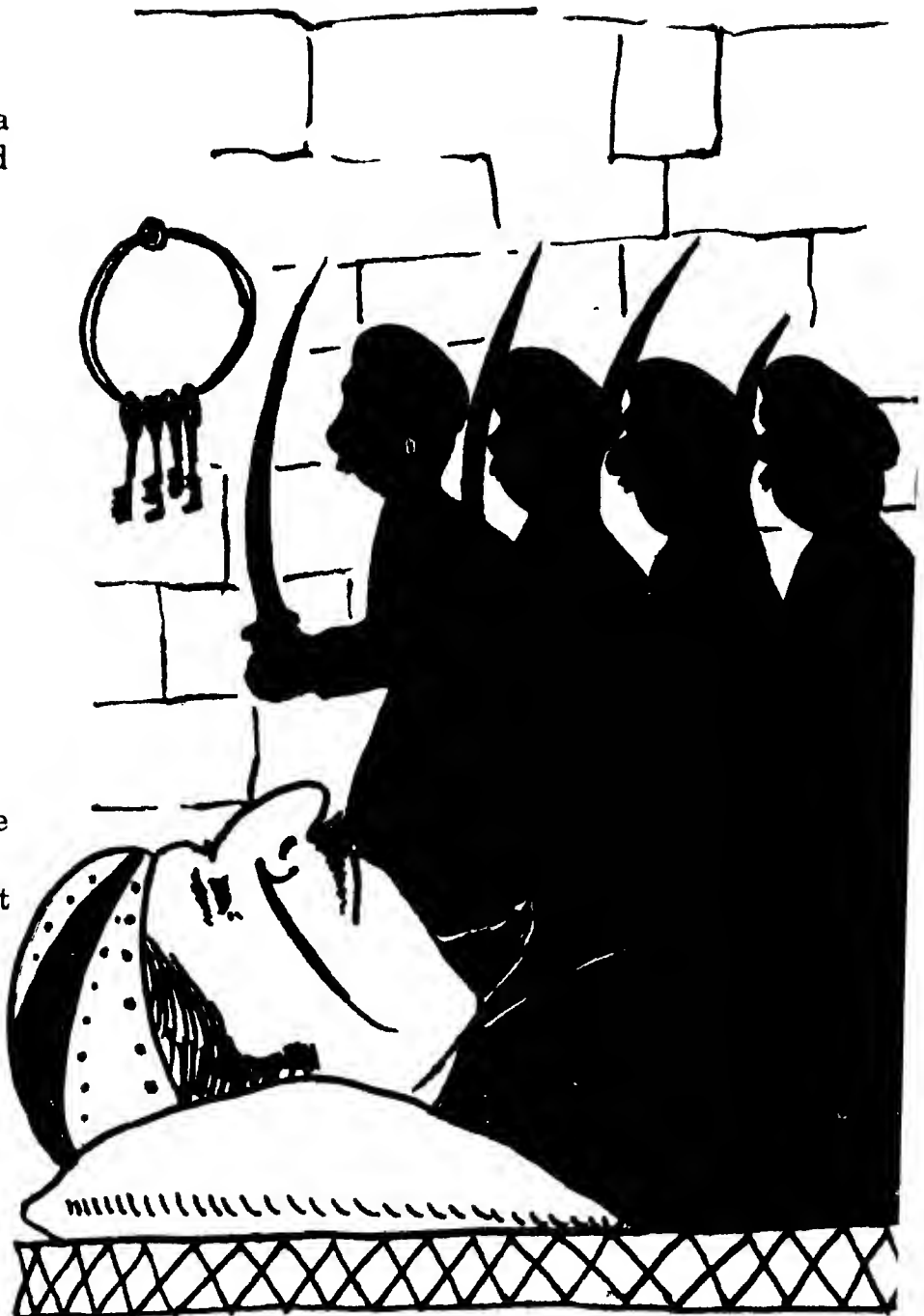
prisoners slipped out. The shadows moved down the street till they reached a certain door. Someone gave a gentle knock. Thrice. The door opened. The shadows slipped in.

Deep inside the house a group of armed men stood and listened intently to a young man who talked in quiet, serious tones. He was a slim, alert-looking man with a proud bearing. Though what he had to say was not a laughing matter, his eyes shone with a certain devilry. The scheme he outlined was fantastic. It was daring. It was mad.

"We can pull it off," he said with complete confidence. "As usual it depends on how swift and silently we move. The enemy must be taken by total surprise. There must be no warning. Now, are you ready?"

"Yes," said the men unanimously. They were eager to get going.

Shivaji—yes, the man was none other than the legendary hero—smiled. "Let us go, then," he said. "Follow me. We will enter by way of the roof." Below his breath he muttered, "Shaista Khan made an unlucky decision when he chose my home, my ancestral house, as his



residence in Pune.”

★

Despite heavy security Shivaji and his men had penetrated into the city. Their plan was amazingly simple. They had broken up into two groups. It was the marriage season. A wedding procession was a perfect disguise. No one had suspected, not even the *Kotwal*, when he signed the permit.

The second group had taken part in the fake skirmish outside the city. They had surrendered. A party of Maratha foot soldiers in the Imperial service, who were secretly supporters of Shivaji's cause had volunteered to bring the prisoners in. Again no one had suspected anything.

★

Shivaji has spent his childhood in his ancestral house. He knew every inch of it and the surrounding streets. Moving with the stealth and agility of a panther, he led the men onto the roof. One by one they lowered themselves into the banana grove within the compound.

In the kitchen the cooks were finishing the last of their chores. They were taken completely unawares. The Marathas

swarmed in and swiftly overpowered them. Before a warning could be raised.

Shivaji ran a quick eye along the wall. “There is a window here,” he said pointing to a spot that had been walled up with mud and bricks. “It leads to the women's quarters.” The Marathas used pickaxes to knock down the bricks. The sounds of blows aroused a servant sleeping on the other side of the wall. He was an old man. The inexplicable noises, the sight of falling plaster alarmed him. He shuffled off in search of the slave girl who slept outside the *zenana*.

“Some thieves are trying to break in,” he informed the sleepy slave girl.

The quick-witted girl immediately decided that the *Amir* must be informed at once. The old man balked. “We cannot disturb him at this hour,” he protested.

“We must,” the girl insisted. “Please go quickly and tell him.”

More afraid of his master's anger than of the thieves, the old man gave a timid knock on the *Amir's* door.

“Go away!” the *Amir* shouted. “What do you

mean by waking me up at this hour?”

“*Huzoor...* There are some strange noises coming from the kitchen... Someone is banging things around.”

“It must be the cooks at work,” the *Amir* said dismissively.

“But...”

“I do not want to be disturbed.”

The servant shuffled away. A few minutes later there was a loud, peremptory knock on the *Amir's* door. This time, it was the slave girl. Her voice was urgent.

“*Maalik...* please come at once. The *begum sahiba* has sent me to inform you that some intruders have broken into the house.”

Before the *Amir* could respond the Maratha soldiers came charging in. Even as he attempted to jump out of the window, Shivaji's sword came flashing down on his hand. Shaista Khan escaped with the loss of his fingers.

The Marathas took full advantage of the darkness and confusion. Led by Shivaji they made their way towards the guard room. Completely oblivious of the confusion, a few soldiers were still fast asleep.



"This is how they keep watch!" laughed the Marathas. They made their way to the *nakar khana* where the war drums and pipes were stored and woke the sleeping drummers; then ordered them to beat the drums.

"At this hour!" protested one of the

drummers.

"Yes... Don't question. The *Amir* has ordered it."

The drummers did as told. The cacophony that followed added to the confusion. The Mughal soldiers rushed about here and there, utterly confused in the dark. It was nearly dawn before

order was restored. There were several casualties among the Mughal soliders. And not even one on the Maratha side... Once again, just as suddenly as they had come, Shivaji and the Marathas were gone... leaving behind yet another exciting legend in the pages of history.



Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (11)

Illustrations: Beejee

*Terms of change and variation,
Spells of conversion and alteration,
Through which animate and inanimate
objects*

*Wax and wane through the ages
Of all its different stages.
The dinosaurs that once ruled gave way
To humans who developed day by day.
Travelling on the road of time,
Which slips by against our desire;
As seconds, minutes and hours expire.
Wrinkled and transformed from its prime,
Goes a body's trip through time.
Mountains crumble as it flies,
Leaves dry and wither, flowers die.
All pulled away in the hurried flight
Of the inscrutable thing that we call time.*

The 'Monkey Brigade' .

An interview by T. Mani

Children were in the forefront of India's freedom struggle. Involved in gathering information and helping the satyagrahis in different ways, they did their bit for the freedom movement. Dr. B.N. Pande, noted parliamentarian, scholar, historian and veteran freedom fighter and the man behind the 'Vanar Sena', the children's wing of the movement, talks to *Children's World* about the contribution of children to the freedom movement.

The huge procession was led by five little girls, in the age group of 9-11 years. They were raising slogans of 'Angrezon, Bharat Chhodo!' (British, Quit India!). At the main square, the procession was stopped by British troops, whose commandant gave them 10 minutes to disperse. "We will open fire after that," he warned.

"Run, children, before the firing starts!" the elders in the procession told the girls.

"You made us lead the procession all this way and when the time comes for facing fire, you want us to run away! We will not go!" nine-year-old Kalpana spoke firmly, clutching the small tricolour tightly in her fist. Her friends agreed

with her.

The others looked on helplessly when the British soldiers began firing at the processionists after the expiry of the time limit given by the commandant. Still clutching the flag, Kalpana was the first to fall. But before she hit the ground, her friend had taken away the flag. She was the next victim. One by one the children fell, along with many others. At the end of the carnage, the small flag stood, miraculously propped up by the tiny bodies of the five girls. Post mortem reports revealed that Kalpana had borne as many as 26 bullets on her tiny chest!

The year was 1942, when the Quit India

Movement was at its peak and the place, Barisal, in West Bengal.

As he recounts the incident, the soft voice of Dr. B.N. Pande falters at the memory, "The courage of those children was remarkable. In fact, as Kalpana demonstrated, they were not afraid even in the face of death! Children of today should be told of the part that those young leaders played in the freedom movement."

Dr. Pande drew thousands of children into the freedom movement. He, along with Kamala Nehru, was instrumental in the formation of the children's wing. Christened Vanar Sena, or the 'Monkey Brigade', it was formed in 1930

with Indira Nehru (Gandhi), as its leader.

What prompted the formation of the Sena? "In those days, when Kamalaji used to walk through the narrow lanes of Allahabad, on her way to and from the Congress office, lots of children followed her. An old lady who observed this, commented that the children were like Lord Rama's Vanar Sena. That set Kamalaji thinking and she mooted the idea of a *Vanar Sena* which would help the elders in their struggle for independence. She asked me to mobilise the children to form the *Sena*," he recalls.

When Dr. Pande, or Bishambhar as he was popularly known, asked the children if they would like to join the *Vanar Sena*, hundreds of boys and girls volunteered enthusiastically. The membership was open to all children below 14 years. Recalling the event, Dr. Pande says, "When I asked jocularly whether *langoors* (big monkeys), meaning youth above 14 years of age, would be admitted too, Kamalaji remarked that an exception would be made and that I would be



enrolled as a *langoor* to help the *vanars*!" His eyes crinkle in merriment as he says this.

Along with Indira Nehru, Dr. Pande went to schools to talk to the children. Soon there were more than 15,000 enthusiastic members. Although the movement started in Allahabad, it soon spread to other cities. But the name *Vanar Sena* was limited to the children's movement in U.P.

The Satyagraha Committee, of which Dr. Pande was the Secretary at that time, organised a demonstration week. Each day of the week was to be observed as some special day, like Mahila Diwas, Vidyarthi Diwas, Kisan

Diwas, etc. One of the days was also designated as Vanar Sena Diwas. The children walked away with the honours as they, led by Indira, took out the largest procession of all during the week. Their meeting afterwards was also quite impressive.

How exactly did the *vanars* help? "Like little monkeys they were everywhere and listened to all the talk going on. Being the children of the locality, they did not arouse the suspicion of the British soldiers or policemen, and had free access even inside the police stations. This way they were able to pass on valuable information of impending arrests or raids, which in turn helped our leaders to alter their own programmes to avoid being arrested," explains Dr. Pande.

The children also went from house to house to collect foodgrains and other supplies required by the Satyagrahis for their camps. And when the Satyagrahis were beaten up, the little *vanars* were there, tending to their wounds and nursing them. They also helped in distributing handbills and pamphlets about the Satyagraha camps. "The

involvement of children in the freedom movement was tremendous. They worked mostly behind the scenes, but their contribution was no less significant," says Dr. Pande.

Were the children beaten too? "Yes, they were beaten, arrested and even killed. One young boy was drowned by the British commandant in Punjab, for spying on troop

movements," he says.

He then turns pensive again. "Once when I was on a mission to the north-west frontier, I saw little Pathan children hung by their feet from trees. Their fair faces were red with all the blood flowing down into them. Barely alive, they were still whispering "*Inquilab Zindabad*". It was the most poignant sight," he says, visibly moved. He is silent for a

while, as if paying homage to those little heroes.

The momentum of the *Vanar Sena* lasted for about a year, but the seeds had been sown for children's participation in subsequent years. It inspired countless children across the country who, like Kalpana, left their imprints in the sands of history.

Citizens' Responsibility

Increasing population, unplanned growth of settlements, inadequate civic amenities, and changing lifestyles—all these have led to overflowing rubbish dumps, unsightly streets and unhealthy surroundings. Overwhelming, yes. Insurmountable, no.

★ Seek the co-operation of your neighbourhood to

decide where the garbage of your housing complex or colony should be dumped, and ensure that everyone does put it there.

★ If the municipality does not clear the garbage as scheduled, contact them and keep reminding them till they do so.

★ If there is a persistent problem, persuade your neighbours

to write to the local newspapers. A flood of letters to the editor can help draw attention to the problem. Try to get newspapers to publish the story along with telling photographs.

It does take initiative and time but it's worth it. A cleaner, healthier neighbourhood is every citizen's right—and responsibility.

(CEE-NFS)

YOUR PAGES

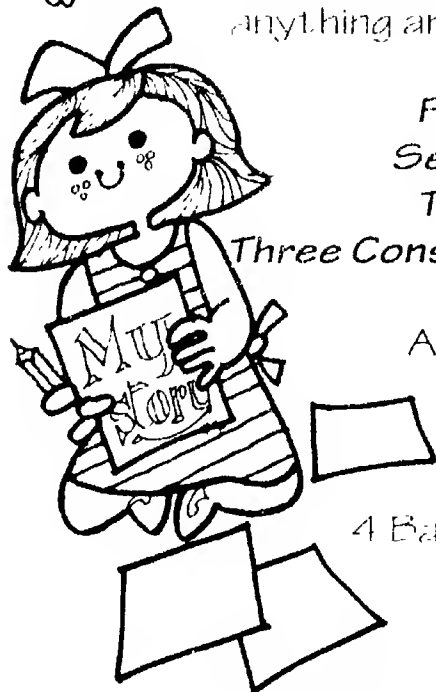
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Children's World celebrates the 50th year of
India's Independence!

CHIP
CHIP



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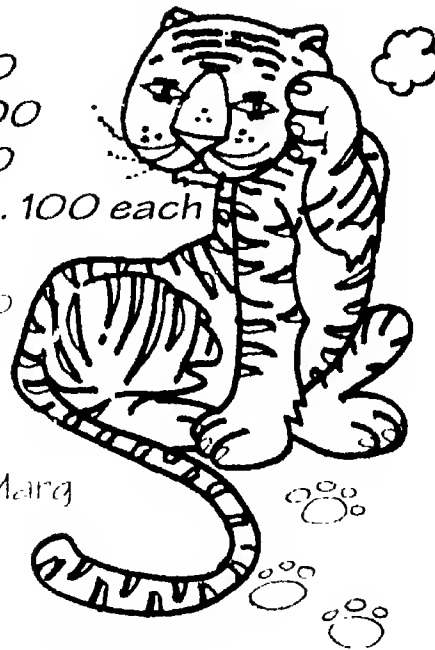
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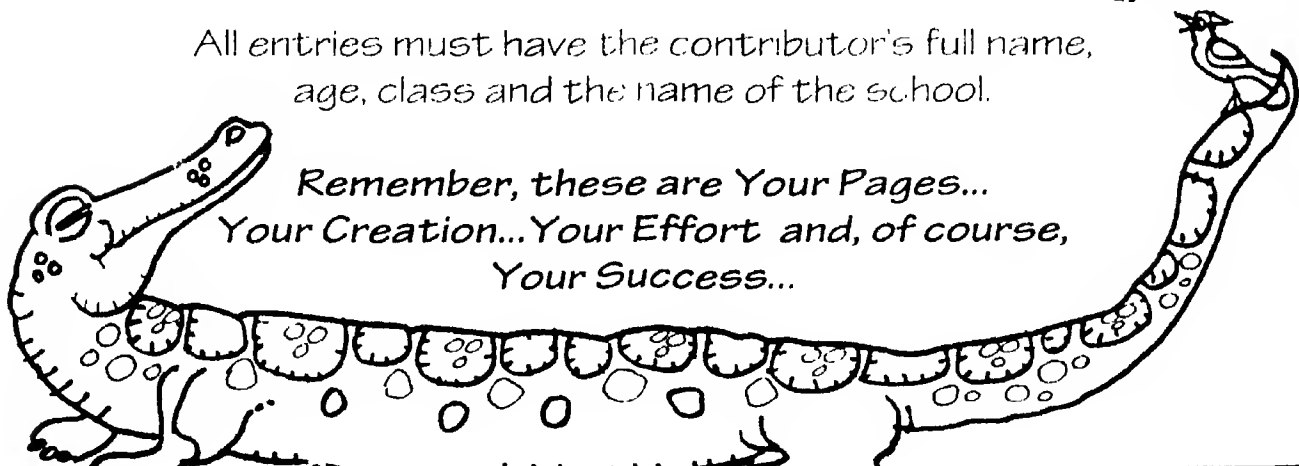
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Last Date extended to August 31, 1996

All entries must have the contributor's full name,
age, class and the name of the school.

Remember, these are Your Pages...
Your Creation... Your Effort and, of course,
Your Success...



Story: Krishna
Narayan
Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

IT WAS the month of May 1787. The summer was at the peak of its intensity. The brown landscape of central and northern India stretched endlessly into the horizon. Nothing stirred in the blistering heat, not a leaf, not a blade of grass, not even a breath of air. Even the insects and the desert lizards had crept under the rocks to shelter themselves from the sun.

Across this burning plain moved a man and his horse. The horse's head drooped with fatigue, its flanks glistened with sweat; saliva dribbled from its jaws in a milky thread. The man swung loosely with the movement of his mount. His face, his coarse shirt and trousers were dark with sweat and dirt. The man was on the verge of collapse.

Suddenly the horse stopped. The rider slowly raised his head and looked about him. The drab landscape extended as far as his eye could see.

The horse's legs buckled and it sank to its belly. The man rolled off

The Treasure of Kumbher



the saddle in a reflex action but was not quick enough. There was an audible crack, and the rider screamed at the pain that shot through his leg. The horse shuddered; it struggled to find its feet, and failed. Its sides heaved as it fought for breath. Its eyes rolled madly. In them the man saw the fear of death. His heart cried out for the noble beast, but he knew he could do nothing to spare its agony.

The once-proud head sank at last, and did not even twitch as it touched the burning sand. The eyes closed.

The man drew his leg out from beneath the dead horse. It lay at an odd angle; he knew his ankle was broken. He tried to get up, but fell back with a groan. He knew then that the desert would try to kill him, as it had killed his horse. He would not let that happen.

The man wiped the sweat off his eyes. He peered up at the sun, then scanned the horizon yet again. Towards the east there stood a tree, a solitary relief in the landscape. The man's wandering mind froze to a

single resolve. He had to reach that tree!

Slowly, painfully, he crawled forward. The last hundred yards were sheer torture. Suddenly the man went limp. The earth spun crazily before his eyes. He hit the ground, unconscious.

★

The caravan meandered over the plain—a motley collection of cavalry, foot soldiers, carts, camp-followers and pack-animals. There were about thirty horsemen in the lead; an equal number brought up the rear. Behind the leading horsemen came the sepoy, two hundred of them, bearing swords and spears, even stout lengths of bamboo. A dozen of the elite carried matchlocks, heavy rusty shoulder guns that rarely fired, and were more of status symbols than useful weapons. The last of the foot soldiers dragged behind them a pair of squat, pig-snouted cannons hooked to two trollies, one trolley containing coils of cotton wicks and tallow wax blocks, the other filled with grapeshot.

Then there followed the coolies, hauling on their backs the luggage re-

quired to support their leader, Senor Noronha. Chairs, mattresses, a folding table, canvas tent, cutlery, cooking implements...

The caravan had set out in an orderly column at dawn, at the beginning of its daily march, but had now spread out into a ragged procession a quarter of a mile long. The sun was low in the west, yet the earth radiated a fierce heat that set one's feet on fire. The men plodded in silence. They had long given up cursing the heat and their own fate. Their sullen anger was directed at one man, the leader of the caravan—Senor Noronha.

He rode at the head of the column on a magnificent black stallion. He sat stiff and elegant in the saddle, looking straight ahead. His riding habit had a knife-edge crease. Only his boots were covered with a film of dust. His horse pranced and curvetted, occasionally bursting into a trot. Both mount and rider seemed unmindful of the sun, and of the resentment of the troops that followed them.

Senor Noronha insulated himself from the



rest of the world with a cool hauteur. Of the rumblings behind him he took no notice, for to do so would have been an admission of doubt.

He was on his way back after a season of intense campaigning. He had, on this occasion, ventured beyond his usual territory. Apart from extracting tax monies from his own lands, he had made bold to levy a 'contribution' of fifty thousand rupees from the king of an adjoining state. The king had refused to pay. Senor Noronha had promptly set torch to the fields and outlying areas of the state till the king

begged for mercy. Nevertheless, Senor Noronha directed his troops to plunder the land, which they did with savage relish. Now he was returning victorious, laden with loot—gold, silver, ivory and skins. He could not rest till the baggage was transported to his stronghold at Harchu. His share of the loot had to be deposited into his coffers.

Flanking the stallion were Senor Noronha's two pet Afghan hounds, straining at the leash, dragging along the native footmen who held them. Suddenly the hounds began to bark furiously.

They broke free and bounded across the plain. The footmen yelled and went after them in pursuit.

Senor Noronha stopped and shaded his eyes. His gaze followed the dogs as they sped towards a tree in the distance. A couple of birds hovered above. From their slow, weaving motion, he knew they were vultures. His fingers tightened on the bridle.

The dogs appeared to be sniffing at an object on the ground. One of them threw its head back and howled. Senor Noronha spurred his horse to a canter. As he drew near the tree, he saw a man

sprawled, face down, on the sand. Red ants scurried over his body. The man appeared more dead than alive.

Senor Noronha had found Prithviraj Chandola.

★

When Prithviraj regained consciousness, he found himself lying on a string cot in a tent. It was dark. A lantern burnt dimly in a corner. A small figure lay huddled on the floor, fast asleep.

Prithviraj tried to move into an upright position. The next moment he was flat on the cot, screaming in pain. His leg felt as if it was on fire. The man on the floor stirred awake.

"Water!" gasped Prithviraj. "In God's name, give me water!" The small man rose. He raised the lantern wick. He brought a jug of water and held it to Prithviraj's lips. He drank greedily, his eyes closed, his senses absorbing the delicious coolness that spread through his body. Then he fell back, and slept. The old man put the jug back on the stool. He looked ruminatively at the figure on the cot, and went out of the tent into the night.

When Prithviraj awoke,

sunlight was streaming into the tent. He could hear the chatter of voices outside. The smell of smoke and cooking assailed his nostrils. In the distance he heard a goat bleat and a pestle pound on mortar. Where was he? He was too tired to find out. He shut his eyes, and dreamed. He dreamed of his village, his friends and acquaintances and of the circumstances under which he had left his home.

"Prithvi," he heard his mother say, "why do you leave? I plead and weep for you to stay, but you are too proud to listen. We may not be rich, but we have this house and plenty to eat. You are still young and innocent. How will you survive?"

Prithviraj remained silent. He would not let his mother's tears melt his resolve.

The old woman tried again. "You are the only one I have in this world. How can you go, leaving me all alone?"

But Prithviraj was adamant. He was going to be a warrior. It was his life's ambition. It was an ambition he had harboured for many years, even as a little boy.

It had been the village blacksmith who had fired his imagination. The blacksmith was an ex-soldier, who had a stump where his leg should have been. Every evening, seated on the *pyol* in front of his hut, he would spin fascinating stories of his life as a sepoy, and of the campaigns in which he had taken part. He had fought under the Marathas and the Rajputs, and for a while even under the British. After he lost a leg, he had returned to the village, and taken up a trade that needed little more than a strong pair of arms.

"Ah, those were the days," would begin the blacksmith, a faraway look in his eyes. "We marched across the desert for two days and two nights till we reached Kishingarh fort. In the next six hours, mind you, just six hours, the Major sahib had gained entry into the fort. It was a glorious moment. Our troops charged madly through the gates, eager to be the first to enter. But I was unlucky. A stray bullet from the fort got me in the leg. And as I lay bleeding, Major sahib captured Kishingarh and

looted it of every coin it possessed!" And the blacksmith would look at Prithviraj and roll his eyes.

Young Prithviraj would listen spellbound. He decided he would join the British army which was well-knit and always victorious, unlike the Marathas who were paid poorly and wore no uniforms. He would train to fight every day. He would leave the village soon.

Once his mother realised that she could not shake her son's resolve, she said no more. She pawned the few ornaments she possessed and bought him a horse. The village blacksmith gave him a saddle and stirrups and a broadsword so heavy that Prithviraj could barely haul it off the ground. Prithviraj was ready. The elders of the village got together and tried to remember the direction he should take to reach the nearest army camp. They told him to ride across the plains. It would take him no more than a day to reach the British settlement. The whole village turned out to send him on his way.

The directions, however, turned out to be

wrong, and at the end of the third day Prithviraj knew that he was hopelessly lost...

Prithviraj drifted back slowly to the present. He felt someone shake him by the shoulder. He opened his eyes, and found an old man squatting beside him, a bowl of lentils in his hands. Prithviraj realised he was ravenously hungry. He raised himself on his elbows, and gratefully accepted the food that the old man fed him.

"It was lucky for you that we happened to pass by when we did," said the old man. "Another hour or two, and who knows?" He shrugged his shoulders. "This should teach you never to venture across these treacherous plains alone. One often misjudges distances and loses one's way. You should have joined a caravan."

He broke off when he heard footfalls outside. The tent flap opened, and there stood the imposing figure of Senor Noronha. He was no longer dressed in his riding habit, but in an embroidered scarlet gown drawn in at the waist with a silk sash. The old man leapt to his feet.

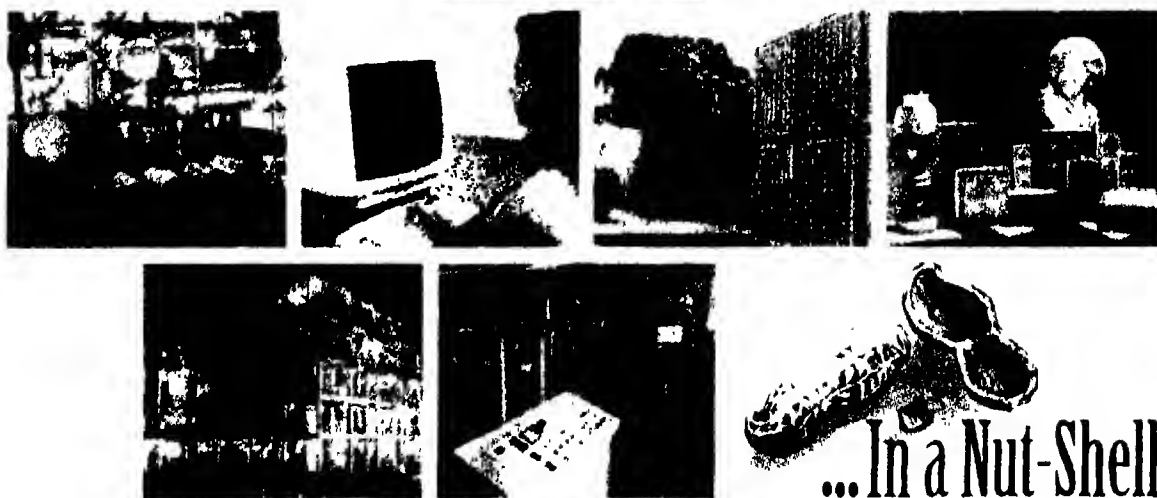
Senor Noronha regarded Prithviraj keenly but with detachment, as if he were a strange species of insect. He withdrew from his gown a cheroot and put it between his teeth. The old man rushed out of the tent, returned with a lighted taper and held it to the cheroot. Senor Noronha inhaled deeply, and exhaled. The tent was filled with tobacco smoke.

"This is our sahib," whispered the old man. "He enquires after your health."

Prithviraj folded his hands humbly. Senor Noronha ignored him. Without a word he turned on his heel and left. Prithviraj ought to have felt humiliated, but was not. He was overawed. Senor Noronha was the first white man he had ever seen. How tall, how fair, how distinguished the sahib looked! How fortunate that he had lost his way, only to be rescued by this lion among men!

"You owe him your life, and don't you forget it," said the old man, picking up the bowl and holding a heaped spoonful to Prithviraj's lips.

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CROSSROADS 8

Capitally Yours!
S.S.

Capitals of countries and provinces? Dead easy, isn't it? But we have tried to make the questions a little complex and more challenging. With a bit of research and thought, this time's prize can be yours. So put on your thinking caps. Remember, we want the *capitals* only!

CLUES

Across

The capital city of:

1. a large island lying west of Africa near Mozambique (12)
6. the country to which Hans Christian Anderson belonged (10)
7. the country whose religious capital is Mecca (6)
8. the country to which Genghis Khan and his grandson Kublai Khan, both great conquerors, belonged (4, 5)
11. the country which is the one of the largest producers of rubber and palm oil (5, 6)
14. the South American country situated near the southern most tip of Brazil (10)
16. the country to which Aung San Syu Kyi belongs (6)
18. the Central American country located between Guatemala and Nicaragua, and discovered by Columbus in 1502 (11)
20. the country in South-east Asia, that has its

borders with Thailand, Laos and Vietnam (5, 4)

23. a federation of seven independent Arab states in South west Asia (3, 5)
24. a land-locked country in South America (2, 3)

Down

The capital city of:

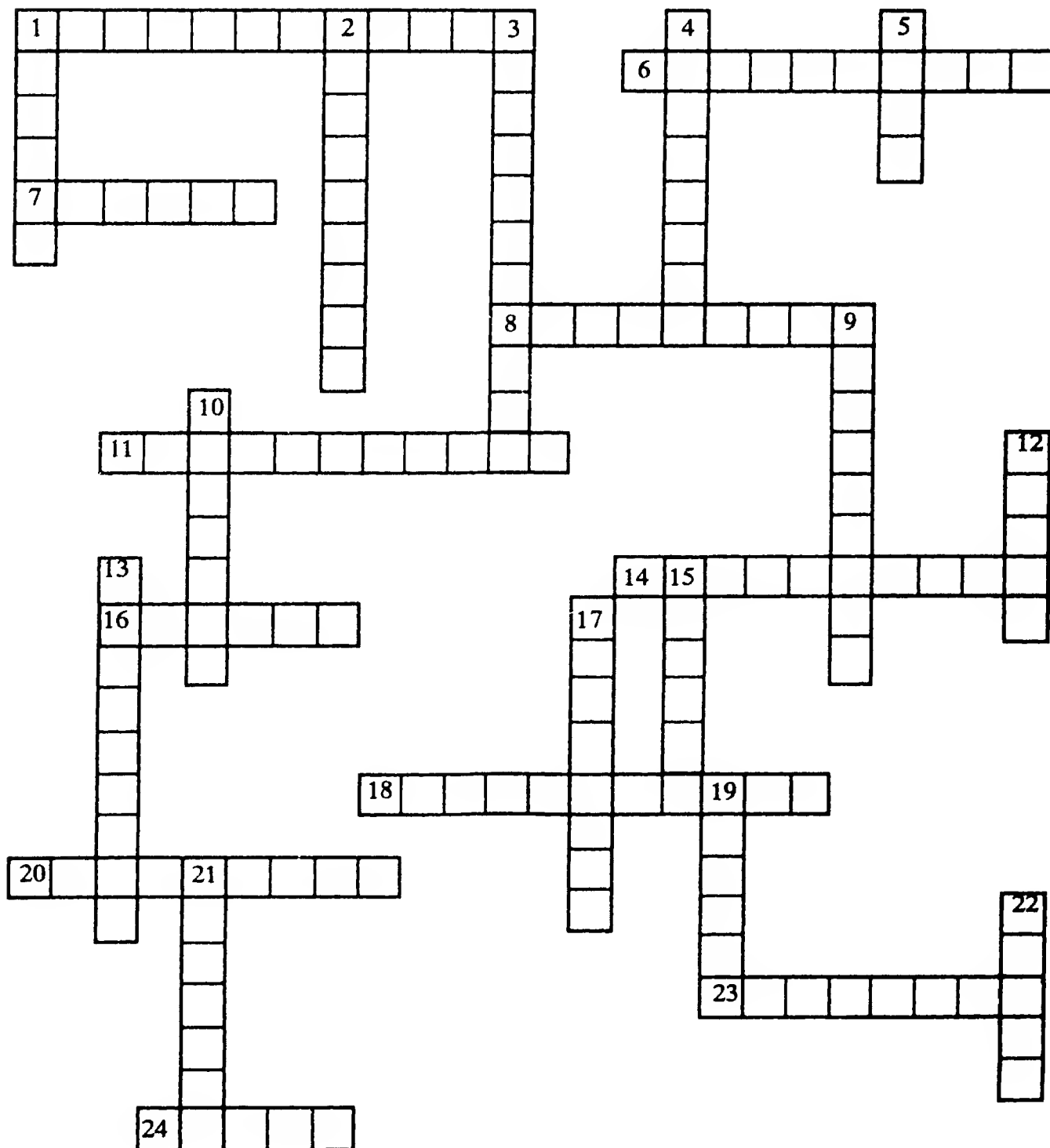
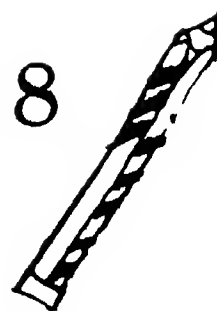
1. a middle-eastern nation that is surrounded by three seas—the Black, Aegean and Mediterranean (6)
2. a country that is famous for its dykes and windmills (9)
3. a land-locked West African country, formerly called Upper Volta (11)
4. an island province which is part of Denmark and which is the land of the Eskimos (8)
5. a country in the South-west corner of the Arabian peninsula which borders the Red Sea (4)
9. an island country close to the Arctic circle often known as the Land of Frost and Fire (9)
10. a part of France situated in South America and which was formerly a penal colony of France (7)
12. the country in South-east Asia, supported by the Americans in its fight against the Communists from the north (5)
13. North Korea (9)
15. the North American country which is second largest in area in the world (6)
17. the long, narrow country, on the west coast of South America (8)
19. the coastal South-west African country situated just south of the place where the Congo river meets the sea (6)
21. the largest country of Central America extending from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean sea (7)
22. one of the smallest countries of South America lying on the west coast whose name is the Spanish word for equator (5)

Hurry up and send in your replies by August 25, 1996. The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year gift subscription to *Children's World*. Answers and results in October 1996. There were no all-correct entries for Crossroads 6 'Environmentally Yours!' (June 1996).



CROSSROADS 8

Capitally Yours!



WHY

Neha Toteja (16)

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

Why do we have to quarrel?

Why do we have to fight?

Why do we have to shed blood?

And then watch people's pitiful plight?

Why do we have to declare war on others,

*And stain the earth with the blood of our
brothers?*

Why do we have to shed our tears,

And watch everyone shed theirs?

*Why are we hungry for the flesh of our
dear?*

Why are we thirsty for blood?

Why do we have to amputate?

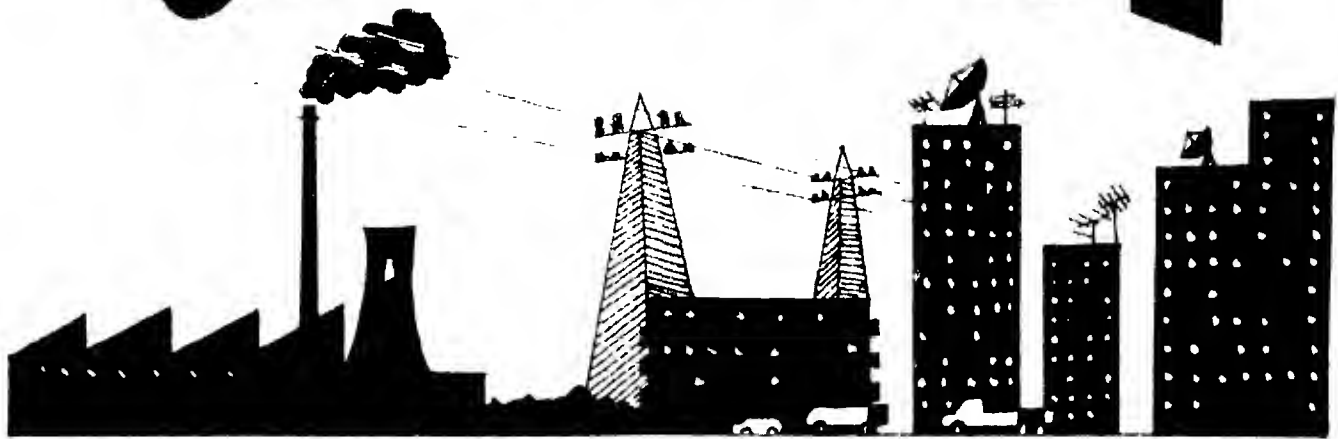
And

such as "peace"?



Smallest, largest, tallest...

CITYSCAPE



**Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury**

A city is defined as a community, where thousands and even millions of people live and work. According to the UN, any community that has over 20,000 people can be called an urban town. A city is just a larger town with more people. They are in fact, the world's most crowded places. They are bustling

business and industrial centres, not to speak of their importance in the fields of education and health, since educational and medical institutions are situated in cities, everywhere in the world.

So naturally the number of people pouring into cities from rural areas, in search of employment, is

staggering. You can imagine the congestion in cities from the following figures: In 1800 only about 2½ per cent of the world population lived in cities. The corresponding figure in 1980 was 40 per cent. Today many big cities have large slums which house these thronging millions, for want of better living

places. The levels of pollution and sanitary conditions are appalling, especially in developing countries. In Bombay, it is estimated that nearly 40 per cent of the population lives in slums which have the minimum sanitary and sewage facilities.

When and how were cities built by man? Which are the largest cities in the present world? Here are some city facts for you.

★The **earliest cities** were believed to have been established by 3,500 B.C., when many Neolithic villages developed into small cities. The **first city**, Ur, was built in the Tigris-Euphrates valley of Sumer in Mesopotamia (now Iraq).

★Can you believe that only **10 million** people existed on earth during the **Neolithic period**? And to think that today many cities around the world have a population of over 10 million!

★Among the ancient cities, **Rome** was the most advanced. It was very large, being spread over 10 sq kms, with a population of over a million. Founded in 753 B.C. by **Romulus and Remus**, the twin brothers

who ruled over the Roman Empire then, it had many magnificent public buildings. It had efficient civic amenities like water supply and sewage disposal system. The town was well planned and laid out. It is one of the most famous cities in the world and is called the Eternal City.

★Among the modern cities, the **most populated city** in the world is **Mexico City**. Its metropolitan area has an astronomical population figure of **19,150,000**.

★In India, **Bombay** is the **largest city** in terms of population, with a figure of **12,600,000**.

★The **smallest city** in the world is **Vatican City** in Rome, which has an area of just 0.4 sq kms and a population of 1000. It is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic religion and the seat of the Pope, its religious head.

★In terms of **density** of population, **New York** has the lead, with 7,490 people per square km.

★Among Indian cities, **Delhi** has the highest density of 6,352 persons per square km. The unending number of people pouring into the city everyday adds to the

congestion. How densely it is populated can be gauged from the fact that the all-India density is 270 per square km.

★The **first multistoried buildings** were built in **medieval times** when there was a severe space crunch in cities. This was because cities were encircled by walls in those days and therefore didn't allow for more people to be accommodated. So, people began building four-and five-storey buildings to accommodate the increased numbers. Some cities like Florence in Italy, solved this problem by knocking down the walls and putting them up further away, thereby increasing the city area.

★**Chandigarh** is the most **well planned** city in India. It was designed by the Swiss architect, Le Corbusier.

★Did you know that the business and financial district of London is called 'the city of London' or simply 'The City'?

Delhi is among the most polluted—both air and noise—cities in the world.

Compiled by T.M.

The Princess and the Parrot

STORY : SUNANDA KATHALAY
ILLUSTRATIONS : Beejee



JUST AS THE GIANT REACHES HER,
THE PRINCESS TAKES OUT THE
PEARL AND RUBS IT...

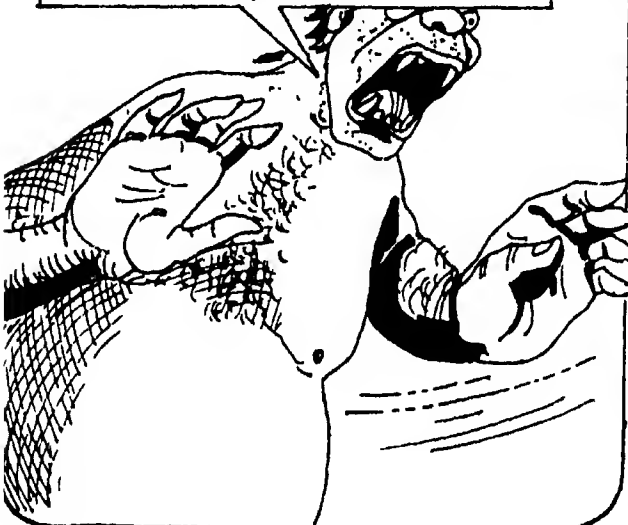


... SHE ZOOMS 10 MILES AHEAD.



EH! WHERE DID
SHE GO?

OH, TRICK ME, WILL YOU? WAIT
TILL I GET YOU... I'LL...



THE PRINCESS RUBS THE PEARL MANY
TIMES AND REACHES THE SEASHORE.



THE PEARL HAS VANISHED
TOTALLY. THE GIANT IS JUST
RUSHING BEHIND HER.



THERE'S NO TIME TO
THROW THE TWIG IN
THE WATER.



HA! YOU CANNOT
ESCAPE! NOW YOU
WAIT AND SEE...
I'LL...



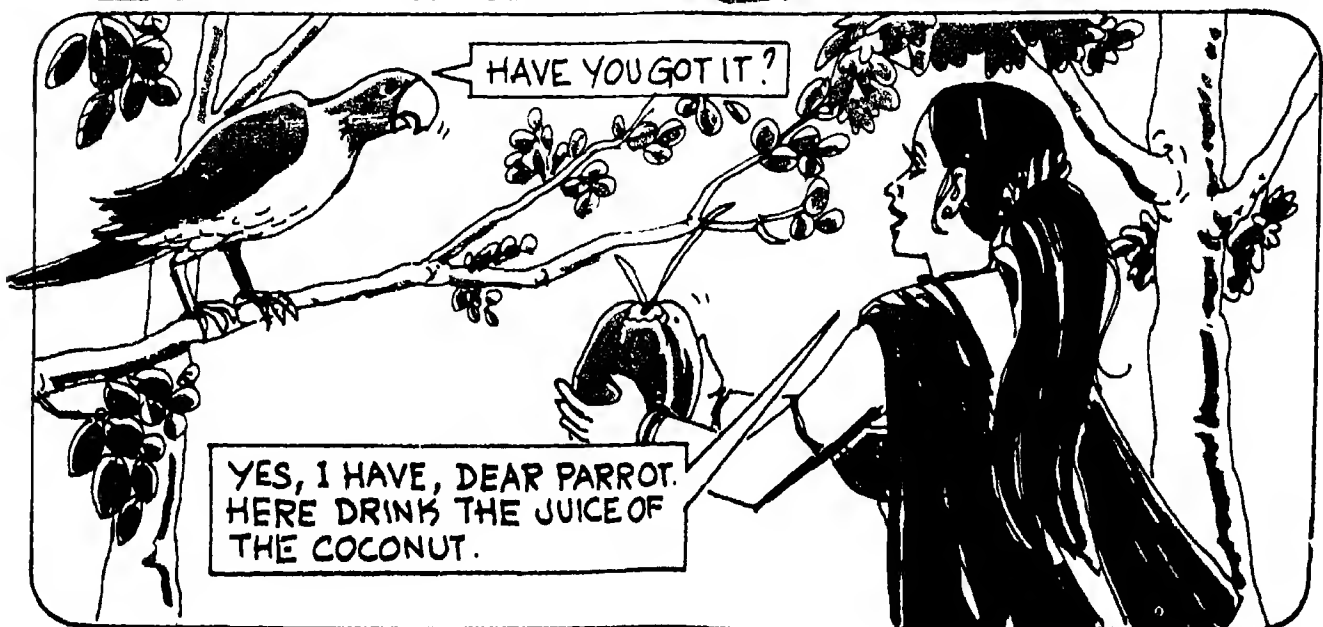
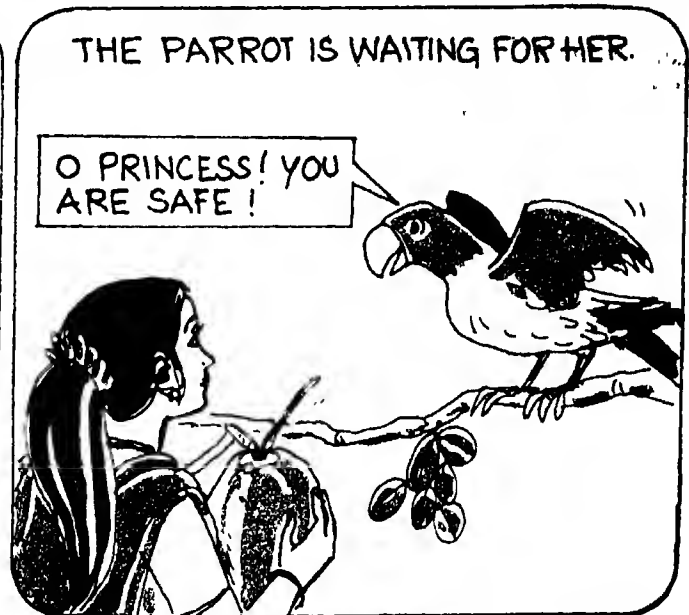
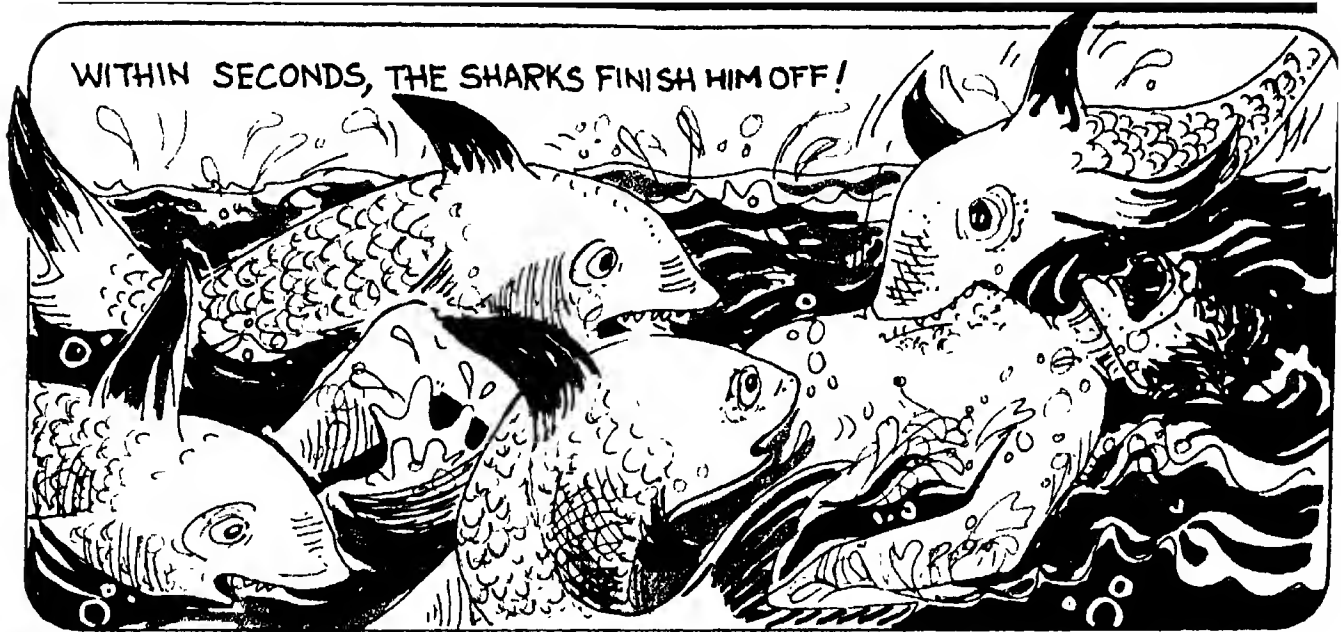
JUST AS THE GIANT REACHES
HER, SHE SIDE STEPS AND...



...THE GIANT FALLS INTO THE SHARK-INFESTED SEA...

AAAAAGH!





THE PARROT DRINKS THE JUICE.



THE PARROT DISAPPEARS.

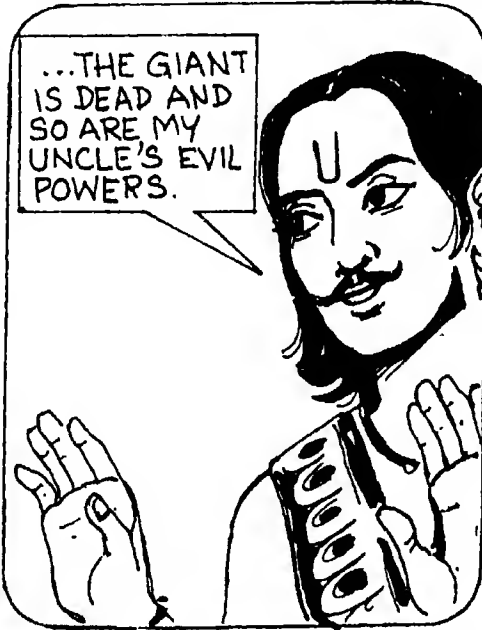


INSTEAD A HANDSOME PRINCE TAKES ITS PLACE

O PRINCESS! YOU HAVE BROKEN
THE SPELL MY WICKED UNCLE
CAST ON ME...



...THE GIANT
IS DEAD AND
SO ARE MY
UNCLE'S EVIL
POWERS.



DEAR PRINCESS! YOU
HAVE SAVED MY LIFE.
WON'T YOU BE MY
WIFE?



IN THE PRINCE'S KINGDOM,
THEY'RE MARRIED.

LONG LIVE THE
PRINCE AND
THE PRINCESS



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Story: Kalpana Bansal

**Illustrations:
Shalini Agarwal**

“WHY can't I?”
Lalit protested.

“All my friends have got one—Amit and Naresh have. They play with them, take them for walks. Mummy, can't I have a dog?”

“I said ‘No’, Lalit. And now I don't want to hear any more about it,” replied his mother.

Lalit trailed off, mumbling miserably.

Lalit's father looked up from his newspaper. “You are a bit harsh on him,” he said.

“He knows how I feel,” muttered Mrs. Sen. “He's being deliberately difficult and that is what is irritating me.”

“He's upset,” said Lalit's father. “He doesn't make demands every other day. And it's not unusual for a child to want a dog. Even I had one when I was a kid.”

“At least you try to understand my feelings,” pleaded Lalit's mother,

her fear and her memories of childhood revived once again. “No dog will ever enter my house.”

Mr. Sen squeezed his wife's hand gently. He did understand her feelings and genuinely wanted her to overcome them. “But that was a long time ago, dear. It's time you overcame it. You have got Lalit to think of now.”

Mrs. Sen was not convinced. The incident might have been ancient history to her husband, but to her it was like

yesterday. Sometimes, she still saw that dog in her dreams. She saw it sitting outside her home. She hadn't been scared of dogs then. Without thinking, she had reached out to pat it. And then...

The animal had dived and bitten her hand and arm, sunk his teeth in her flesh as she screamed. There had been hospitals, stitches, injections, the scare and the pain.

With time the wounds had healed but the mental scars remained. From that day on she had been terrified of dogs. She would refuse to visit people who had dogs; if there was a stray dog on the pavement, she would cross over. More than twenty years later she was still terrified.

"It was an accident," Mr. Sen said gently. "It would never have happened if you were careful. It was a stray dog. Pet dogs are very affectionate."

Mrs. Sen kept quiet. She was convinced that her husband did not understand.

The incident had not mattered before because Lalit had never wanted to have a dog. Now that two of his friends had pups,

Lalit too wanted a dog for himself. But it was the last thing his mother wanted to give him. Lalit might say that the dog would be totally his responsibility; Mrs. Sen knew that she would end up caring for the pet. So she was determined not to have one although even her husband felt that it would be nice to have a pet.

"It will only be a puppy," Mr. Sen tried his persuasive skills once again. "You cannot be scared of a puppy."

"Let's drop the topic now. I am not having a dog and that is final," Mrs. Sen was adamant.

"Just give it a thought," said Lalit's father as a last minute attempt.

"No. No dogs, ever."

Lalit's birthday was approaching. His mother thought of an innovative kids' party with games and eats specially for the children. She bought all the things that Lalit had wanted but not what he wanted most.

The party was a grand success. Lalit loved the gifts and the fun and frolic. That night when he went to bed, he hugged his mother as he had not done for a while now, as if thanking her for all her

efforts.

"The party was fun, Mummy. I had a lovely time," he mumbled.

"Anything for you, child," his mother replied, feeling a wee bit guilty.

Lalit had not mentioned dogs for days now. 'Maybe it is just a passing fad,' she thought, 'Anyway, it was best for the family including the dog.'

Over the next few weeks Lalit seemed rather quiet, but his mother didn't worry. She thought it was probably all the birthday excitement that had worn him down. Then one day, tidying the chaos in his room, she saw some coins in his desk drawer. Curiously, she moved aside the papers on top and then stared, at not just a few, but a pile of coins and currency notes. Shocked, she shut the drawer. There must be at least a hundred rupees in there. 'How on earth did Lalit get money like this?' she wondered as she waited anxiously for him to return home.

Obvious answers flashed through her mind. Had he stolen the money, because he had got very little pocket money since his birthday. All sorts of

questions and doubts clouded Mrs. Sen's mind. The moment Lalit returned from school, his mother could not stop herself from questioning him.

Lalit stared out of the window without speaking for a few minutes. He looked stubborn and then at last he said, "I saved it."

"Saved it!" echoed his mother in amazement and relief. "But why? For how long? So much money?"

"Because I want a dog!" he yelled. "I want a dog and you won't get me one. I thought I would save every penny of my pocket money. Amit has bought his from the kennel club for Rs. 500. I am going to save till I have enough..." He choked over his words and tears welled up in his eyes.

Mrs. Sen stared at him, heart racing, and then swept her child into her arms. "You want a dog that badly?" she whispered.

Lalit nodded, tears flowing freely and easily.

"All right," she said. "You will have one. You need not save your pocket money. Daddy and I will buy you one. This very Sunday."



"See, Mummy, we got a pup that is six weeks old. Look," beamed Lalit as he pushed a bundle of white fur under his mother's nose.

Mrs. Sen recoiled in terror. "Very beautiful," she said maintaining her distance as her heart pounded with panic.

"Why don't you show

him that bed you made for him, Lalit, said Mr. Sen coming to her rescue, "and see if the pup wants some water."

"Okay," Lalit said and ran out happily.

'He looks a different child now,' Mrs. Sen thought 'happy, in fact, ecstatic with his new friend.'

Mr. Sen squeezed his

wife's hand. "It's a harmless little thing, dear. Try to hold him."

"No, not yet. Maybe later," she replied.

Lalit was back within no time. "He does not want to leave me, Daddy. He had such a grumpy expression when I put him on the bed. I have decided to call him 'Churchill'."

In spite of her nervousness Mrs. Sen could not help laughing, "Churchill?" she echoed. "That is a funny name for a dog."

"He is my dog. Are you, not, doggy?" Lalit whispered.

Later, Lalit begged to be allowed to keep Churchill in his bedroom but, to Mrs. Sen's relief, even her husband agreed with her on that. Churchill would be fine in the verandah he said. He would not be lonely. Lalit could wrap him up in a towel and settle him snugly, and he would be fresh and playful in the morning.

"All right," Lalit said obediently.

"Good night, Churchill," said Mrs. Sen without any emotion or feeling in her words.

As they all went to bed, Mr. Sen checked on the

dog for the last time while his wife lay wide awake, silently thinking of the nightmare that might happen again. Slowly, she too drifted into sleep but was haunted by dreams where she saw herself running, screaming in terror. Then abruptly she came awake. She had heard something. She sat up. Then she heard it again, a cry from somewhere downstairs.

It was the puppy. Her heart thudded. It must have woken and found itself alone and started to whine for company. She listened tensely but there was no sound from Lalit's room. No sound anywhere beside the sorrowful cry from the verandah and that of her own breathing. The cry reminded her of Lalit when he had cried as a baby; she could never ignore it.

Her heart pounding with fear, Mrs. Sen got out of bed and walked towards the door and down to the verandah. She switched on the light. Jet black, plaintive eyes gazed at her from the cotton-lined cardboard carton. Something turned and twisted inside her. The pup was really cute; she had barely looked at it earlier. It had such a

sweet little face.

Churchill whined. Mrs. Sen remembered Lalit's cries. "This little thing is only a few weeks old. It is just a baby, all alone in a strange new house," she thought.

Instinctively she bent down to stroke it and then to lift it. "What is the matter, Churchill?" she asked very gently, holding it softly as it snuggled in her arms.

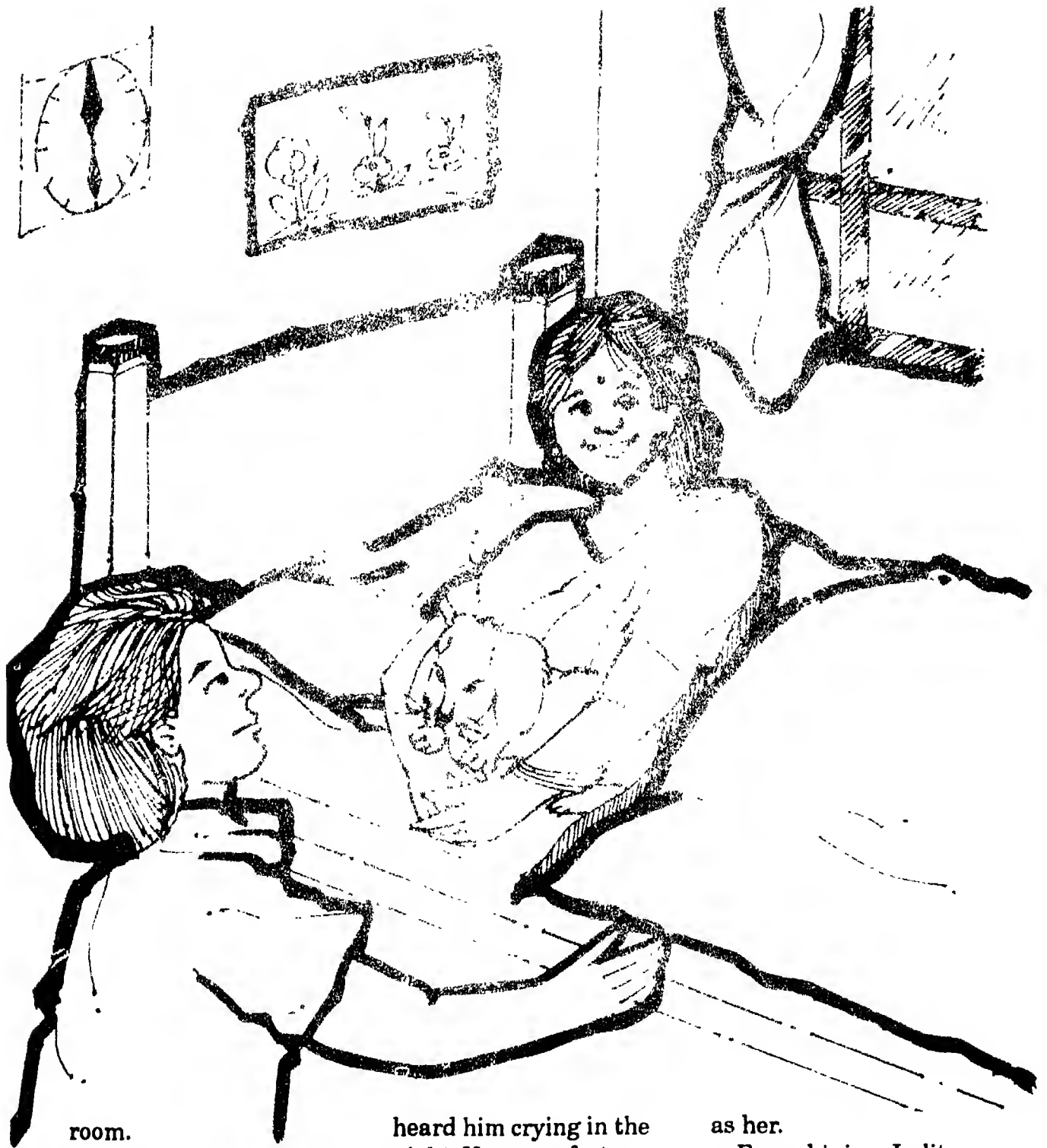
"Are you frightened or just lonely? Don't you worry. There is a little boy upstairs, who loves you very much."

Churchill nuzzled against her. Then lovingly he began to lick her; licking her hands, her arms, licking the scars of that childhood horror, and Mrs. Sen did not mind it. In fact, it was strangely healing, strangely comforting, as if all he wanted was to love and be loved.

"Come on," she whispered as she carried him to her room and settled him in her bed. She had never expected things to change so suddenly.

★

As the sun streamed through the curtains, Mrs. Sen heard Lalit's footsteps approaching her



room.

"Mummy, Mummy, my dog is gone!" Then all of a sudden he stopped dead, staring at his mother's bed. Churchill was snuggled in there as he had been all night.

"He was lonely, Lalit," said Mrs. Sen softly. "I

heard him crying in the night. You were fast asleep so I brought him up here."

Lalit too hopped into the bed and picked up his dog. Churchill licked him eagerly. Mrs. Sen was thankful that her son did not have the same fears

as her.

Eyes shining, Lalit questioned his mother, "You do like him, don't you, Mummy?"

"Yes, dear," replied his mother. "I love him. He is very sweet."

This time she meant every word of it.

A Web of Friendship

By Reader of the Month: Bhavana Nair

FRIENDS. Wilbur and Charlotte. Pig and spider. This is their story.

Wilbur is a pig, saved from untimely death by Fern.

"...Some pigs were born last night... one of the pigs is a runt. It's very small and weak... your father has decided to do away with it."

"Do away with it?" shrieked Fern. "You mean kill it? Just because it's smaller than the others?"

"Fern," said Mr. Arable, "... A weakling makes trouble..."

"But it's unfair," cried Fern. "The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?"

That puts the lid on the argument between Fern and her father and Wilbur's life is saved.

Wilbur thrives on the attention and good food that is given to him by Fern. But one day, a bored Wilbur attempts to escape from his pen. Unsuccessful, young

Wilbur is swamped by intense loneliness.

"...Wilbur wanted love. He wanted a friend—someone who would play with him... He didn't know whether he could endure the awful loneliness any more." At this nadir of despair in two-month-old Wilbur's life comes Charlotte. "Do you want a friend, Wilbur?" she asks him.

"...Wilbur saw the creature that had spoken to him in such a kindly way... a large grey spider." Charlotte—the spider with a penchant for big words, hardworking, wise, friendly, loyal.

Wilbur's happiness is complete as he overcomes his initial doubts and fears about Charlotte—"...fierce, brutal, scheming, bloodthirsty..." However, bad news awaits the little pig. He is going to be killed for Christmas.

"I don't want to die! Save me, somebody! Save me!" screams Wilbur in terror. "I want to stay alive, right here in my comfortable manure pile

with all my friends. I want to breathe the beautiful air and lie in the beautiful sun."

"You shall not die," Charlotte reassures her friend.

"Who's going to save me?" asks Wilbur.

"I am," promises the brave spider.

"Charlotte... knew from experience that if she waited long enough, a fly would come to her web; and she felt sure that if she thought long enough about Wilbur's problem, an idea would come to her mind. 'If I can fool a bug... I can surely fool a man. People are not as smart as bugs.'"

Thus begins the mysterious appearance of messages on a spider web describing Wilbur. While hardly anyone credits the genius of Charlotte, Wilbur becomes a celebrity; the threat to his life blows over as people line up to see 'Some Pig'

"...he (Wilbur) could hardly believe that a mere spider would be able to save his life... No pig

ever had truer friends and he realized that friendship is one of most satisfying things in the world."

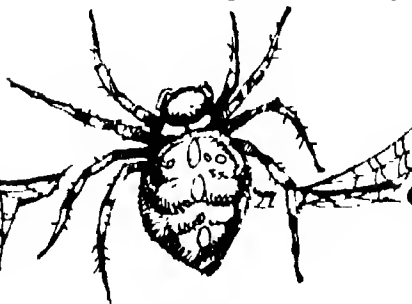
"Why did you do all this for me?" he asked. "I don't deserve it. I've never done anything for you."

"You have been my friend," replied Charlotte. "That in itself is a tremendous thing. I wove my

webs because I liked you. After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die... By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle. Heaven knows anyone's life can stand a little of that."

"...you have saved me, Charlotte, and I would gladly give my life for you—I really would."

What Wilbur does in return for Charlotte makes for the rest of E.B. White's story, *Charlotte's Web*. Exemplifying friendship, the book can be read countless times with the same emotions surfacing at every reading. And, importantly, it makes you look at spiders with a more kindly eye.



Spidery Facts

Spiders belong to a group of creatures called *Arachnida*, and are closely related to scorpions.

There are many kinds of spiders in the world, tiny ones like the Money Spider to large ones like the Bird-catching Spider.

The head and chest of a spider are in one piece, separated from the rest of the body by a narrow waist. On the abdomen is the spinneret, from which comes the silk to weave

the web.

This silk is a special kind of protein. Spiders use their legs to draw out the silk from the spinnerets. The liquid silk becomes hard as it is drawn out. These threads are stronger than steel threads of the same diameter and can be stretched to one third their length without breaking.

The Nephila spider of Madagascar spins a cocoon. Its webs are large with some of the threads that help the

web to stay in position being able to stand much weight without breaking. The people of Madagascar have been known to weave clothes from the silk of the Nephila.

Of the 30,000 species of spiders, very few are dangerous. The Black Widow is an example. Its bite causes great pain and paralysis of muscles. A person may die when bitten by a Black Widow if the muscles involved in breathing are affected.

“WAKE up, Raghu! We have a lot to do today!” Raghu’s grandfather shook him awake. He just turned over sleepily and murmured that it was a holiday.

“But, Raghu, it is Independence Day! I have taken out the flag and ironed it. You will have to arrange for the flowers...”

Oh, no! Raghu groaned

the backyard of their house.

Raghu’s entire family—his parents and two sisters, Sangeeta and Kavita, some of their neighbours and a few of grandfather’s friends would be present. The old freedom fighters gave fiery speeches about the days under British rule. Raghu’s sisters sang patriotic songs taught by their grandfather. The

for him. Also, he wore khadi and spun at his *charkha* (spinning wheel) at least for an hour every day. It was a sacred ritual with him. Just as some people go to the temple and others do *puja* for a few hours everyday, grandfather spun the *charkha*.

Raghu shared a good rapport and easy camaraderie with him. He could easily tell his grandfather

RAGHU’S Freedom Struggle

Story: Thangamani

Illustrations: Beejee

aloud. He knew that he could not sleep any more. He was his grandfather’s unofficial assistant for the flag hoisting. His grandfather was like an excited schoolboy on Independence Day. He got up earlier than usual, which was anyway an unearthly hour according to Raghu, and woke up everyone else too. After making the preparations, he led the flag-hoisting ceremony in

ceremony then ended with the singing of the national anthem and distribution of sweets. Raghu’s grandfather never settled for toffees. He always bought a kilo of *barfi* at the sweet shop from his meagre pension to distribute after the function.

Grandfather was a freedom fighter and was very particular about celebrating Independence Day. It was a special day

things he wouldn’t dream of telling his parents. He knew that grandfather understood him and his problems better than anyone else in the entire family. Now, as he stretched lazily, he said, “Oh *Thatha*, you are so archaic! It has been 50 years since we got independence and you still insist on celebrating it. The poor British must have even forgotten that



they had once colonised our country!" Raghu teased his grandfather, who was sitting impatiently on the bed waiting for him to get up.

But his grandfather became grim at the mention of the British. His eyes blazed with anger. "Poor British indeed! Why, they would have bled us dry, had they been allowed to be here any longer! Taking away our national treasures, exporting our cotton to run their textile mills...hmp!" he snorted. "They divided our country, stifled our progress. We couldn't even sing 'Vande Mataram' in our own country! Oh, those fellows..." Grandfather became charged and extremely emotional.

"But you could have just ignored them and continued to do what you wanted to. After all, it is our country..."

"It was not that simple, Raghu," he shook his head. "You wouldn't understand. You were all born into freedom, including your parents! I tell you, you can't appreciate freedom till you have lost it," Grandfather got up to go.

"Okay, okay, I'm getting up! We'll have the

best Independence Day celebration ever!" Raghu jumped out of the bed and ran to brush his teeth grinning to himself at Grandfather's anger.

It was a couple of weeks later that Anant came to stay with them. He was Raghu's cousin and lived in Bombay. He had recently taken up a job and his company had sent him for training at their factory in Madras, for two months. At 21 he was nearly eight years older than Raghu. Since there was no spare room in the house, he had to be accommodated in Raghu's room for the duration of his stay. Raghu didn't mind. In fact, he was looking forward to some 'masculine company', as he put it. He often said that his two giggling sisters drove him nuts.

The two went for movies and listened to music on the stereo. They enjoyed TV programmes and played TT in the club in the neighbourhood. Things were fine for a few weeks. Then the trouble started.

When he had come, Anant was quite apologetic about imposing upon Raghu's space. Initially he kept his things in place, mostly on his bed and didn't make undue de-

mands. But slowly, he began throwing his stuff around. Raghu, who liked to keep his room neat, tried to protest, but Anant made fun of him for being such a fusspot. Raghu fumed. Anant also began bossing Raghu around. "Open the window a little wider, will you?" he would say, when Raghu was trying to do a difficult sum. Or, "Be a sport and switch off the stereo. I have a severe headache." If Raghu reduced the volume and continued listening, he snapped, "Can't you be more sensitive to others' needs? Here I am, working 12 hours a day and coming home with a headache, only to be disturbed like this!"

Raghu was furious with Anant for talking about sensitivity. Who was being insensitive? After all, it was his house, his room, his stereo...Aloud he said, "But the volume is so low, I can't hear it, even if I stick my ears into it!" Raghu's protests only elicited a rude response.

That was not all. In the mornings, Anant pulled out the sports page first. It was practically a tradition in their house that Raghu got that page first—ever since he had begun reading the paper

as an eight-year-old. But now, his mother scolded him if he didn't give it up. "Anant is a guest, after all. You should make him feel at home," she admonished him. Raghu grumbled but had to give in. Even his mother had started pampering Anant instead of him! Anyone would think it was his house," he said under his breath.

One morning, a few days later, after Anant had snatched away the sports page as usual, Raghu came and sat quietly in front of his grandfather, who was spinning at his *charkha*.

"Why the long face?" enquired his grandfather, looking at his favourite grandson.

"Why, he thinks he owns the place, especially my room!" burst out Raghu. "He has even begun arranging the furniture to his liking. The cheek!"

Grandfather didn't say anything. He bent his face to hide a smile and went on spinning.

Raghu went on. "I can't listen to music, I can't keep the light on at night, because his lorship wants to sleep. And yesterday, he borrowed my new TT bat, without as much as a by-your-leave! At this



rate, I'll end up asking his permission even to breathe!"

Just then Anant came in and Raghu went off in a sulk. He went to his room and closed the door and turned on his stereo at full volume. A few minutes later, Anant banged on the door. When a grumbling Raghu opened it, he entered and, going straight to the stereo, turned it off. In the silence that ensued,

Raghu could hear his heart thudding violently in his chest. It felt as if it was going to explode.

"Listen, Anant, this is my room and I will do what I like," he said in as quiet a voice as he could manage.

"Cool it, *yaar*! No need to get so worked up about the whole thing. As long as I share it with you, you will have to consider my likes too, okay?"

"That's precisely it!

You are practically unrecognisable. We enjoyed this music together before. What happened suddenly to make you dislike it?"

"That's my choice. Let's say, I liked it then and I don't like it now! And now, I have work to do. So scoot, will you?" he said imperiously, sitting down at the table—his—Raghu's table!

Raghu went red to the roots of his hair. It took

very little guesswork on his part to realise that Anant had only pretended to be interested in the things that Raghu was. It was his way of worming his way into his room and taking over his possessions one by one. The worst part was that Anant's stay had been extended by his office by two more weeks. Raghu felt like crying, screaming, anything to let out his frustrations. One day he even tried shouting at the top of his lungs and was promptly scolded by his mother for acting like a baby.

He felt isolated. His parents were of no help. His sisters, who drove him mad earlier, now seemed like angels in comparison to Anant. With them, it was he, who did the bossing. But they would not include him in their activities, because he had never agreed to join them before. He always took his troubles to his grandfather, but strangely, he didn't seem to want to get involved in Raghu's affairs this time. He listened to his woes silently and at times, Raghu could swear that he saw a smile or an amused gleam in his eyes.

He became withdrawn

and angry by turns. He spent his time trying to invent ways of annoying Anant. His grades in the tests dropped. He was clearly off colour and felt martyred. He tried to do his own thing, but even that was not possible most of the time. His parents accused him of being a bad host if he disturbed Anant in any way. Oh, life was the pits!

And then, Anant's day of departure came! He began packing up his bags and was gone. The room was finally his own! What glorious freedom! Raghu let out a whoop of joy.

"Oh, *Thatha!* I feel like dancing and singing today. My days of slavery are over at last! I am the master of my room again. Now, I can do what I want to. Isn't that great? This calls for a celebration!"

Grandfather went on spinning. But this time he didn't bend down to hide his smile. He was in fact laughing.

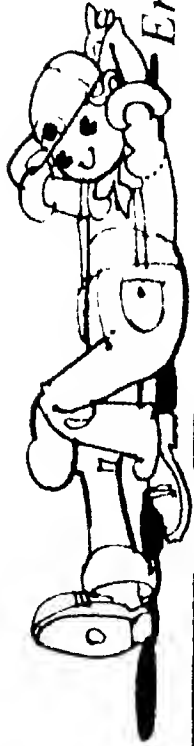
"What is so funny?" Raghu demanded.

"Nothing. I was thinking of our conversation a few months ago. If this is how you feel after just a couple of months when your freedom has been curbed, can you imagine

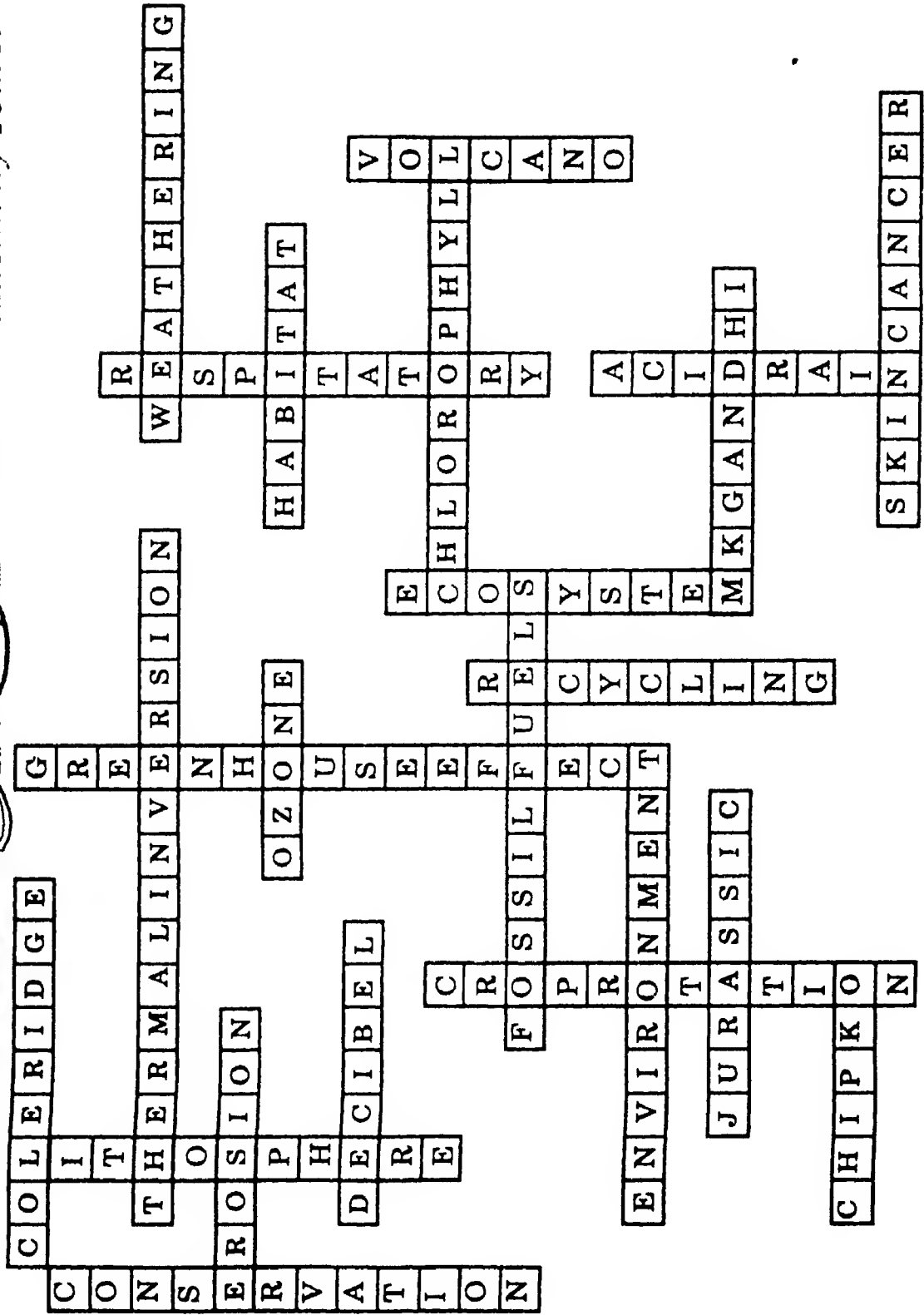
how millions of Indians felt when the British tried to run our government, tell us how to dress, what to study—and continued doing it for over 250 years? How so many of us grew up afraid to sing songs of patriotism and raise slogans praising our motherland? When we were beaten up and arrested for listening to the speeches of our leaders? Even children were not spared.

"When Anant was bossing you around and quietly usurping your privileges, what did you do? Weren't you just dying to throw him out? I'm sure you now appreciate how we felt when the British left our country for good? Raghu, don't you think we are justified in commemorating the day we got freedom for our country?"

'By golly, *Thatha* was right!' Raghu thought. Had it been as bad as all that? Now that he himself had experienced the loss of freedom, he understood better. How perfectly horrible it would have been were the British still ruling us! Raghu looked at his grandfather with new eyes that held more than a hint of hero worship!



Answers to
CROSSROADS 6
Environmentally Yours!



Story: Dipavali Debroy

Illustrations:

Subir Roy

IT WAS so sunny that it was difficult to look straight up at the top of the hill. But Sumit knew it was there, the temple that he must reach.

The Todla hill—a mass of red earth and black rock—rose steeply out of the fields that looked like the patchwork quilt, in green and brown and yellow, that Mummy had started to make just before she died.

At its very top, a single *Gulmohar* tree could be spotted even from a distance, because it was flaming now with blossoms. Somewhere under its shade, Sumit had been told, lay the cave temple dedicated to the local deity, Todla Ai (Mother Goddess of Todla).

Daddy was a Professor of Sociology at the university. Temples erected to local goddesses were his special interest. Aunty Reena—really a student of his—was a ‘research scholar’. Yes, that was the term, Sumit remembered. Under Daddy’s guidance, she was writing something



ending called a 'thesis', and the worship of local gods and goddesses.

"Don't call her 'Aunty' anymore," Daddy had said to Sumit, the night after Daddy's wedding, when Aunty Reena had come home looking so very different with vermilion on her forehead, and conch-shell bangles on her arms.

"Why, what should I call her, then?" Sumit had asked.

"You can call her Mummy," Daddy had said.

"But she isn't Mummy. She's Aunty Reena."

"I explained to you," said Daddy. "From now on it is she who will be a mother to you. Do call her 'Mummy'. It will make you feel better."

But Aunty herself had never insisted upon being called by that name, and Sumit had gone on calling her 'Aunty'. Even now, when the marriage was a year old, and Sumit had got quite used to having Aunty Reena around the house.

Aunty Reena had curly hair and laughing eyes. She was quite a good sort, Sumit felt. She knew a lot of stories and was always ready for a game of Scrabble. She never

shouted at Sumit. She never said a word, no matter how many helpings of cake Sumit took or how untidy he kept his room. No, Aunty wasn't a bit like the stepmothers of Cinderella or Snow-white. But, of course, she was not Mummy. Sumit really couldn't call her that.

The sun shone down relentlessly. Sumit climbed up a few more rocks that jutted out just like steps. He was sweating all over. But then, he knew he must climb on. How else would he get to Mummy?

After all, that was the point of the whole trip!

Sumit remembered the conversation that had taken place a couple of weeks ago at home. Daddy was all worked up about this study-tour the university had sent him on. With Aunty Reena, he would cover local shrines of this part of Maharashtra, and write a paper for an international conference. The two of them had been sitting on the sofa discussing the tour while Sumit was playing with his cars on the floor.

"I particularly want to visit Tbdla," Daddy had been telling Aunty Reena.

"The shrine there is a thousand years old. The temple itself dates three hundred years back."

"Yes, I know," Aunty had said. "The hills this side are dotted with cave-temples of this sort. The Buddhists sometimes have embellished them with their carvings and frescos. But actually they are even older. They are really primitive shrines to 'mother goddesses'."

"A few of them," Daddy had said, "have a rough-hewn stone figure in them, clearly that of a woman in a motherly pose. A few of them have just a slab of black stone with vermilion on it. Some have more statues of Buddha or Ganpati, belonging to a much later period. But all of them are really ancient seats of 'mother goddesses'."

"What is a 'mother goddess'?" Sumit had asked, looking up from the cars and stressing the word 'mother'.

Daddy had, for some reason, looked stricken, and been unable to reply. Aunty Reena had spoken for him.

"You see, Sumit, everywhere in the world, when primitive people have thought about the force that worked the

world, they have thought of it as a mother-figure. That's because primitive people were a little like children, and to a child, the most important thing is its mother. Strong, protecting, comforting. She is a goddess to him. That is why in Africa, in Australia, in Asia, all over the world, in fact, the oldest shrines are shrines of goddesses conceived as mothers—shrines of 'mother goddesses'. The worship of God as an abstract concept or as a father-figure came much later.

Sumit did not quite understand the discussion that followed between Daddy and Aunty. But he did pick up this much: The Todla hill near Pune in Maharashtra had a rock-cut cave temple at its top. It had a powerful reputation. Whoever had lost his mother, would be able to see her again, once he had succeeded in climbing up to the cave temple. There lay the rub. Unlike most other such hill-top temples in Maharashtra, this one had no stairs leading up to it! One had to climb it the long, hard way.

But what did that matter, if Sumit could meet Mummy at the end



of it?

"Oh Mummy, Mummy," cried Sumit as he climbed on. It didn't matter at all that his knees were getting scratched and grazed, and his hands numb and raw. He had already finished the water he was carrying in his water-bottle. He was glistening with sweat. But no, he would not climb down.

Daddy and Aunty had told him not to climb, but sit at the foot of the hill, in the shade that it cast on the ground. People from the neighbouring villages had built a tiny platform there. On it they placed their offerings to the goddess in the temple up on the hill-top. They were content with that. Only the desperate climbed all the way up to the temple of Tbdla Ai.

There had been one or two villagers sitting round the platform even today. Pendse, the driver of jeep that had brought them, had offered to look after Sumit as Daddy and Aunty climbed the hill.

"No, Daddy, no," Sumit had cried out. "Let me climb with you!"

"Don't be mad," Daddy had said. "This hill is quite beyond you. I'll let you climb up the stairs at

Parvati in Pune, or even Karla, but—"

"But this one is out of question," Aunty had finished for him, firmly. Sumit had almost burst into howls of disappointment. Why, that defeated his whole purpose.

Didn't they say that once you climbed up the Tbdla hill you were sure to meet the mother you had lost? Well, if they have been saying it from primitive times, it must be true.

Sumit had really clutched on to that belief and thought of it every night as he went to sleep thinking of Mummy. He would go to Tbdla hill, and meet Mummy. She would be there for him, he knew. So went the story about Tbdla hill, didn't it? He only had to make it to the top.

Coming all this way, was he to simply stand at the foot of the hill—and stare?

"No, Mummy," he had said under his breath. "I just have to see you!"

He had watched them go up, losing their balance occasionally, and clutching on to each other. Daddy carried both of their water-bottles, while Aunty Reena carried the

jhola (shoulder-bag) full of their notebooks, camera and other odds and ends. The tiffin-carrier as well Sumit's own water-bottle had been left with Sumit.

For a while Pendse chatted with Sumit. Then he yawned and settled himself down for a snooze inside the jeep. As soon as Sumit was sure he was asleep, he grabbed hold of the water-bottle and got down from the jeep. Then he jumped on to a huge piece of rock and began his climb up.

Daddy and Aunty had begun their climb from another flight of rocks and by now had disappeared around the corner of the hill. 'Suits me!' thought Sumit. He hauled himself up from one rock to another, grabbing, clutching and clinging on to rock-edges.

Half-way up, he looked down. How small the jeep looked from above, like the toy jeep he had at home!

Ooh! With a sudden puff of air, the branch of a shrub growing out of a cranny brushed against Sumit. His face began to sting, but he did not lose balance. He kept on climbing.

It got steeper and steeper. Hotter and hotter.

The wind grew stronger as well. It became quite difficult to hold on to the rocks and go up. He felt thirsty. What about a sip from the water-bottle?

There was a quick movement right in front of his nose. A huge rat looked out from the gap in between two rocks. With a scream, Sumit lost his footing. The water-bottle rattled down the hillside. Sumit himself fell on to a slab of rock below and hurt his knee badly.

As the blood began to trickle down from the wound, Sumit thought of Mummy again. She had always carried some antiseptic and cotton with her. "With a brat like you, what else can I do!" she used to say. "I have to be prepared for all sorts of things at all sorts of times!"

'Oh, Mummy, Mummy, will you be ready with antiseptic and cotton-wool when I reach the top, all scratched and bloodied?"

Driven by such thoughts, Sumit pulled himself together and began climbing again. The sun beat down relentlessly on his head and very near the top, he lost his footing again. But he did not let go of the rock he was holding on to,

and heaved himself up to a higher one jutting out above.

And he realised at once that he was at the top! "I've made it!" he shouted to himself.

In front of him there was the dark entrance to a cave. There were half-finished carvings around it, and inside, before it grew too dark to see, there were some rough-hewn columns of stone. Long, waving grass grew everywhere, and the entrance was half-hidden by them.

Sweat pouring off his brow, skin tingling, Sumit thrust the grass aside and went into the cave.

"Mummy!" he called. "It's me!"

There was no answer. Only a wild fluttering of wings and an awful musty smell as hordes of bats, disturbed from their sleep, flew into his face.

It was so dark inside that Sumit could hardly see. The walls seemed to press down on him and he felt as if he would choke.

"Mummy! Where are you? Don't you know, it's Sumit! Your Sumi, Sumu, Suma."

The cries filled the cave but there was no answering cry.

Sumit found that the

narrow path he was following inside the cave took a turn towards the right. It was even mustier and stuffier now, but Sumit went along it. For, far down, he could see a glow. That must be the statue of Todla Ai, shining in the dark. That must be where Mummy was.

He rushed towards it.

And tripped and fell on the stone floor. Everything grew even darker.

Then there were soft arms picking him up and gathering him into the soft folds of a *sari*.

"Here I am," Sumit heard through the hurt and haze. "Don't worry, I'm here."

"Oh Mummy," was all Sumit could say.

He kept his eyes closed and just sank into the lovely, soft lap. Gentle fingers soothed his forehead and a gentle voice asked, "Have you come all this way to..."

"Yes, Mummy, to see you. They said I would find you here."

"Who?" said the voice, the most wonderful voice.

"Daddy, Aunty, the books they read, the people around here..." Sumit's voice trailed off as he sunk deeper into the happiness and peace that



enveloped him.

"I see." And there was a kiss, like the fall of a rose-petal.

"I miss you so much, Mummy," said Sumit.

"What do you miss most about me?"

"Most?" Sumit thought for a while. "I miss you so much! Remember the roly-poly we used to have at bedtime? The figures I used to make with the dough as you made *parathas*? Your bathing

me, your scrubbing me! Your smacking me, too? Remember how you smacked me the time I finished off all the pickle?"

There was no answer, only the play of fingers in Sumit's hair. Then a question again.

"But what do you miss the most?"

"Your calling me 'Sumi, Sumu, Suma'. No, your putting that burning thing on my knees when they get cut. Remember

how you used to carry it with you all the time? You said you could never be without it until I grew up?"

Suddenly someone else burst into the cave.

"Reena! Are you there? And Sumit? Oh, thank God! I was growing frantic waiting outside!"

Sumit opened his eyes and gasped. It was Daddy who had come in and it was not Mummy but Aunty Reena who was

sitting with his head in her lap.

The glow that he had seen was not the idol of Todla Ai but just sunlight coming through what was the other end of the cave.

The cave was clearly a tunnel through the hill, bending midway so that someone looking at one end would generally not realise that it opened on to the other side of the hill. There may have been an idol or statue of a goddess in the cave, but only once upon a time. Now it lay empty. There was nothing inside except for unfinished carvings on the walls with bats clinging to them.

Sumit, when he had fallen, had reached quite close to the far end of the cave, and now that he had opened his eyes, the sunlight coming through was no longer just a dim glow, but clearly showed up this part of the cave.

In that blaze, it was very clear that there was no one inside the cave except the three of them.

With a last look at its empty interior, Sumit got up and left the cave. Once out, he took in a whole lungful of the fresh air, and sank exhausted in the shade below the *Gulmohar* tree at the

mouth of the cave.

"You deserve a spanking!" began Daddy. He looked red and angry and was breathless after the quick climb. "We were half-way up when we saw Pendse waving wildly at us, pointing at the car and then up the hill. I got the idea at once."

"Sorry, Daddy," said Sumit.

"Reena rushed up faster than me. She said she had a hunch you would be trying to get into the cave. I saw her go into the cave from this end."

"I felt it would be easier catching him half-way through..." began Aunty.

But Daddy did not let himself be interrupted. "Why on earth did you come up, Sumit? I had told you not to."

"Hand him a water-bottle," broke in Aunty's voice quite sharply. "He must be so thirsty!"

Sumit realised that he was absolutely parched. As he took a water-bottle from Daddy and gulped the water down, he heard Aunty say, "And now let me put some antiseptic on your cuts. You've got yourself badly bruised!"

Sumit was so surprised that he spilled water all over his shirt-front, "You mean you've got it with

you?"

"Of course, it's there in the *jhola*," said Aunty Reena. "I carried it today in case either of us has a fall or something. But, from now on, I'll carry it all the time with me!"

"Yes," said Daddy, handing her the cotton-wool and the bottle of antiseptic. "The fellow will be getting into more mischief, I'm sure. Getting to be quite a menace!"

"That's not the whole reason why," whispered Aunty as she bent over Sumit's bruises.

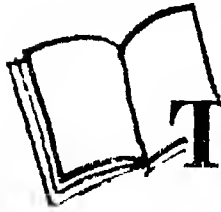
Sumit flinched as the antiseptic burned through his cuts. He screwed up his face and two drops of water squeezed out of his closed eyelids.

"Sumi, Sumu, Suma, don't cry," said Aunty, but this made Sumit cry harder.

"Don't feel too bad about not meeting Mummy inside the cave," Aunty Reena whispered again. "All this about the temple of Todla Ai, it's just folklore, you know. A story."

"No, it's not," said Sumit, "I did meet you there, Mummy."





Tales of the Unknown

Impossible? Tales of the Unknown

By Paro Anand

Price: Rs. 65

Dinosaurs! We've Only One Earth! and Other Plays

By Dilip Salwi

Price: Rs. 75

Published by A'N'B Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

EVEN as many children's book publishers close shop or diversify into textbooks and adult fiction, here is one who has decided to explore a market which is traditionally said to have large potential but very difficult to corner. Teenstorm Books from A'N'B Publishers is the latest series of children's books to hit the market with two volumes by well known authors.

Both Paro Anand and Dilip Salwi are familiar names to young readers. Children rarely identify a book by its author; it is the characters who are more well known. And

both have lived up to the acclaim they have received so far.

Paro Anand's *Impossible? Tales of the Unknown* is a collection of stories which deals with all sorts of strange happenings. And she has certainly gathered a formidable variety.

In 'The Cherry Tree Girl', it is left to the reader to wonder whether a tree really grew on the girl's head or whether it was all a case of a highly imaginative mind; in 'Shadow', the imaginative dog takes on real characteristics when he rescues his inventor from drowning; the father comes back from the dead to give his son strength and to atone for being responsible for his son's handicapped state in 'Like Father Like Son'; in 'A 100% True Story' it is not clear who Parvati really was, a ghost or a genuinely harassed woman; while 'Who is it?' is a straightforward ghost story complete with long-

forgotten murder, love and rage. Paro Anand, as usual, is simple and she is supremely capable of conveying atmosphere but some of the stories do not seem any different from the penny-thriller magazines which use so-called ghost stories for sensationalism as a sure way to gain readership. The last three stories fall into this category. In a collection of stories for children maybe themes which appeal to them more, which deal with happenings which are common in their lives but are still strange would have been a better proposition.

Salwi's book is unique in that it has for the first time attempted to give one-act plays for children. Indian children's fiction has diligently stayed away from this genre so far. And when the plays deal with scientific themes, the venture comes into the level of rarest of the rare. The three plays in the

collection deal with the need to conserve our environment. In 'Dinosaurs! We've Only One Earth! not only is everything told about the era of dinosaurs, there is information about those animals which exist on earth and have descended from the dinosaurs. There is a lot of action in each of the plays, necessary to

keep the interest alive on stage, and a certain element of humour as well. For instance the comments of the alien in 'Strange Place, This School' is a vindictive statement on the current education system which places emphasis on examinations rather than the quest for knowledge.

Both the books are well produced and are hardbound editions—a welcome change from all those flimsy paperbacks which usually denote children's fiction. Though the price is pretty steep, they are still good buys; at least they are attractive, readable and informative.

E. Shailaja Nair

Book News

an interested glance and their contents span stories, information, hobbies and biographies.

The hardbound *Kaleidoscope* is a collection of 34 stories most of which are prize-winners in the Competition for Writers of Children's Books organised by CBT. Stories of school and home, animals and birds, environment and adventure—you will find a whole gamut here. Superb illustrations by Tapas Guha are an added attraction.

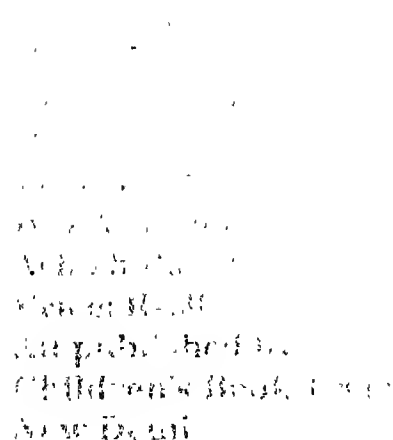
Within the wild, stormy covers of *Call of the Ocean*, is a mine of information on a geographical feature that covers two-thirds of the earth. The story of the ocean—past, present and future—is narrated interestingly in

this book. A handy reference.

Mathew Varki, a dedicated philatelist, passes on his interest in stamps to young readers in *Philately for the Young*, encouraging them to take up a hobby which educates, entertains and takes you to far-off places while sitting at home.

The sixth volume of the *Remembering Our Leaders* series focuses on the lives of Dadabhai Naoroji, Chittaranjan Das, Rash Behari Bose, S. Satyamurti, B.R. Ambedkar, and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. A reading makes us appreciate all the more the effort of our leaders to win us our independence, the 50th anniversary of which we are approaching.

B.N.



The new crop of CBT books is here; the bright covers invite more than

Trip to Toyland



Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

TOYS and teaching... It seems to be an odd pair. Toys are for playing with, and teaching is serious business. Can the two go together?

Well, they do. In fact, they have always done. Toys help teachers in teaching and children in learning. In other words, besides being playthings, toys are educational aids.

Let us watch that nursery teacher. She is telling the tiny tots an elephant story. "Once there was an elephant," she begins.

The teacher wishes that she could show the class an elephant. But there is none around there. So the picture of an elephant will do. Better still is a toy elephant.

When they know what an elephant looks like, the children follow and enjoy the story better.

So is it if the teacher, while talking about a camel or a crocodile, shows the children a toy camel or crocodile. Or, for that matter, a toy aeroplane or helicopter.

In the past the pathshalas for children might not have been so

well equipped. But they had enough toys as aids to education.

The children had toys at home too. They played with them and learnt something from them.

The dolls gave them some idea of how men and women in different parts of the country dressed. If they were images of the gods, they learnt something about the deities. Playing with toy animals and birds also meant learning something about these and other animals.

Girls had their kitchen sets. That is, miniature



models of all their mothers had in the kitchens. They also had dolls' houses. Playing with them was a sort of introduction to house-keeping.

Children of the warrior class played with toy weapons. In its own way this was a first lesson in what they were going to do in later life.

As now, then too children used to make their own toys of clay. They also used dough for what children use plasticine today.

The tradition of toys and teaching has come to us down the centuries. Modern educationists are all praise for it.

Today's child has more playthings than any child before. They range from the folk to the space age toys.

An Indian child can choose from the toys made in India and elsewhere in the world. The same goes for the child of any other country. Dolls like Barbie have become international dolls. So have toys like the teddy.

Radio, TV, newspapers, magazines and catalogues tell everybody of the latest toys made in any country. So do toy fairs and exhibitions.

Experts write on toys and the good playing with them does to children. A greater number of people thus know that toys are more than mere playthings.

There are more toy shops now than ever before. They sell not only toys but also games and puzzles and other educational aids.

Some of these shops sell children's books too. And some children's book shops have toys sections as well.

In a modern nursery school you may not see any books or charts. But you will find lots of toys. Little boys and girls play with them. While they play, they also learn.

With building blocks they make walls, towers and other things. They play with toy animals and birds. Also with toys that can be split into and put together again.

They move merrily around on tricycles and in pedal cars. For more fun they have swings, slides and merry-go-rounds.

They learn counting with the help of marbles or such other things. Even the letters of the alphabet are like pretty playthings.

As they grow up, the children play with puzzles

and games. There are word games too. Add to these toy medical aids, Meccano and electronic kits for those interested in engineering. Playing with each is mental exercise too.

As their hobbies at home and at school, some children make dolls and other toys. Or they make a variety of models. If it is aeromodelling, they make models of aircraft and hovercraft.

At a school science fair you see so many wonderful little models the children have made. No doubt their teachers help or guide them. But it is mainly a show of what the youngsters have learnt to make while playing at it.

Such activities tell of the children's aptitudes. That is, what they are interested in or inclined towards. Or how they are going to shape in the years to come.

Sometimes there are exhibitions of folk toys. Some toy-makers are also there. You can watch them shape or mould dolls, animals and other things out of clay or grass or other such material.

Folk toys have not changed much over the years. Children of 50 or 100 or more years ago

played with almost the same toys as you do.

Then there are dolls museums. There you can see rather than read the story of toys.

Dolls of so many lands in their various costumes sit or stand there like mute children. They form a United Nations of a kind.

Some individuals and centres teach children how to make dolls and other toys. You may go in for a short course during the summer vacation or whenever you find it convenient. There are "teach yourself" toy-making books too.

Maybe one day you will come up with a toy which teachers can use as an aid to education.



GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the *Children's World* Pen-friends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have pen-friends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

8203
Megha Sood (10)
53/D, Pocket F
G.T.B. Enclave
Delhi 110093, India
Dancing, swimming
Any country
8204
Chanchal Arora (13)
d/o Mr. D.P. Arora
10/86 Swarn Path
Mansarovar, Jaipur
302020
Rajasthan, India
Music, making pen-friends
India, Canada
8205
Rebecca D'souza (12)
302/A, Bharti Apartments
Old Sherry Rajan Road
Bandra (W)
Mumbai 400050,

Maharasthra, India
Collecting stamps, basket ball
Any country
8206
Anju (15)
B-12A, MIG (DDA) Flats
Mayapuri, Delhi 110064
India
Dancing, pen friendship
Any country
8207
Roshni Nair (11)
186-G, Arjun Nagar
Safdarjang Enclave
New Delhi 110029, India
Stamp collecting, reading
Any country
8208
Meera Gurung (14)
Lingmethang Primary

Name _____

Address _____

Hobbies _____

Pen friends wanted in _____

**Age limit 10 years*

Signature _____

GIRLS

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Sonali Gupta (10) 4 Anand Puri Meerut 250002 Uttar Pradesh, India Drawing, reading Any country 8210	Meenal Batra (15) H.No. 422, Sector-29A Chandigarh, India Reading, making friends India, Japan 8215	Avantika Sharma (11) d/o Col. S.K. Sharma C.O. 10 Guards c/o 56 A.P.O., India Singing, dancing Any country 8221
Kezang Chokey (15) c/o Tappo P.F.O. Khangma Project Facilitation Officer Khangma, P.O. Kangling, Dist. Trashingang East Bhutan Singing, pen-friendship Any country 8211	Meera G. (10) 39/532 'Srivatsam' Monastery Road Kochi 682011 Kerala, India Reading, dancing Any country 8216	Mary B. Daniel (14) Maria Niwas Opp. J.T. College Road Hasari Gadag, Karnataka, India Dancing, painting Other than India 8222
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Minakshi Dua (14) B-14, 15 Krishna Park Khanpur, New Delhi 110062, India Travelling, reading, India 8213	Chimmi Seldon (14) Rangthangwoong Jr. High School P.O. Duksum T/Yangtse, Bhutan Reading comics, music England, India 8218	Radhika Narang (11) 76 Pkt-D, Mayur Vihar II Delhi 110091, India Music, caring for animals Any country 8224
B.M. Radhika (13) c/o B.S. Mukunda 322, 16th Cross Yelahanka	Pooja (12) 20/10, West Patel Nagar New Delhi 110008, India Singing, reading India, Singapore 8219	Simran Sandhu (12) House No. 73, Sector 2B Chandigarh, India Dancing, swimming Any country 8225
	Sarvishta Gaonkar (16) Gaonkar Bungalow Alto Santa Cruz Bambolim Complex	Sumana Banerjee (14) 29/2 Old Rajinder Nagar New Delhi 110060 Music, reading India

BOYS

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 8226
Tandin Wangchuk (15)
Ugyen Dorji High School
Class IX
P/o Haa, Bhutan
Pen-friendship, collecting
photographs
Any country | Pitampura, New Delhi
110034
India
Stamps & coins, music
Any country | 30 Narayanswami
Apartments
7th Floor, V.I.P. Road
Near V.I.P. Circle
Kareli Baug, Baroda
390018
Gujarat, India
Stamps, music
Any country |
| 8227
Amrit Rai (15)
Ugyen Dorji High School
(IX)
P/o Haa, Bhutan
Stamps, collecting
photographs
Any country | 8232
Sacha Dorji (16)
c/o Kelzang Dorji
Block Khar, Vill. Labar
Dist. P/Gatshel
East Bhutan
Pen-friendship, reading
Any country | 8237
Namkha Wangdi (15)
Class VI-B
Pema Gatshel Jr. High
School
P.O. Pema Gathshel
Eastern Bhutan
Singing, music
Japan, India |
| 8228
Tshewang Rinzin (16)
Ugyen Dorji High School
(IX)
P/o Haa, Bhutan
Reading, painting
Any country | 8233
Kanjur Thinley (13)
Rangthangwoong Junior
School
P.O. Duksum
Tashiyangtse
Bhutan
Watching video films,
reading
Japan | 8238
Narul Hassan Shaikhji (9)
c/o Shri S.G. Shaikhji
785 Controllorate of
Quality of Assurance
Kirkee, Pune 411003
Maharasthra, India
Writing, cricket
U.S.A. India |
| 8229
Pallav Gogoi (14)
c/o Sainik School
Goalpara, P.O. Rajapara
Assam 783133, India
Stamps & coins, music
Switzerland, U.S.A. | 8234
Jigme Sonam (12)
Rangathangwoong Junior
School
P.O. Duksum
Trashiyangtse, Bhutan
Watching TV, reading
Japan | 8239
Akhil Sood (11)
Flat No. 210, Block C-4-B
Pocket No. 13, Janakpuri
New Delhi 110058, India
Reading, stamps & coins
Any country |
| 8230
Binod Kumar Tamang
(15)
Class IX-A
Ugyan Dorji High School
P.O. Haa, Bhutan
Stamps, music
Any country | 8235
K. Advait (14)
H.No. 1-8-92,
Chikkadpally
Hyderabad 500020
Andhra Pradesh, India
Cricket, travelling
Australia, Sweden | 8240
Prasoon Garbyal (14)
25 Travor Road
New Forest, Dehradun
248006
Uttar Pradesh, India
Badminton, reading
U.S.A., Australia |
| 8231
Amitesh Bajaj (12)
53 Rohat Enclave | 8236
Dewitt Johnson (14) | |

BOYS

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 8241
Ravish Dua (11)
B-14,15, Krishna Park
Khanpur
New Delhi 110062, India
Cricket, reading
Any country | Pen-friendship, writing
Any country | IIT, Hauz Khas
New Delhi 110016
Playing the guitar
India |
| 8242
Vipul Kumar (16)
c/o Mr. R.K. Sabharwal
6/3 C, DIZ Area, Gole
Market
New Delhi 110001, India
Travelling, making
friends
India, U.S.A. | 8247
V. Sridhar (14)
17/1 Senthil Apartments
Bharathi Road, II Street
Perambur, Madras
600011
Tamilnadu, India
Stamps & coins, paintings
Any country | 8253
Swarup Chatterjee (12)
c/o Shri P.S. Chatterjee
3 C/93, NIT
Faridabad, Haryana
India
Drawing, music
U.S.A., Japan |
| 8243
Binit Agarwal (14)
Class IX, Roll No. 908
Don Bosco High School
Bagchung, Jorhat
Assam 785001, India
Pen-friendship, music
Singapore, India | 8248
Kelzang Thinley (15)
Class V, Zangkhari
Primary School
Lhuntshi, Bhutan
Drawing, reading
India, Nepal | 8254
Komallesh (14)
Qr. Bi, 3/79,
Refinery Township
Gujarat Refinery
P.O. Jawahar Nagar,
Baroda 391320
Gujarat, India
Skating, stamps
Any country |
| 8244
Pushkar Sobti (11)
M-19, Rajouri Garden
New Delhi 110027, India
Stamps, reading
U.S.A. | 8249
Sonam Tobgay (13)
Class V
Zankhar Primary School
Lhuntshi, Bhutan
Reading, music
Japan, U.K. | 8255
Sonam Phuntsho (16)
Class V
Zangkhari Primary School
Lhuntshi, Bhutan
Archery, arts
Japan, U.K. |
| 8245
H. Kartik (10)
C 4 G/267 Janakpuri
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Let us remember... Let us pledge again..!

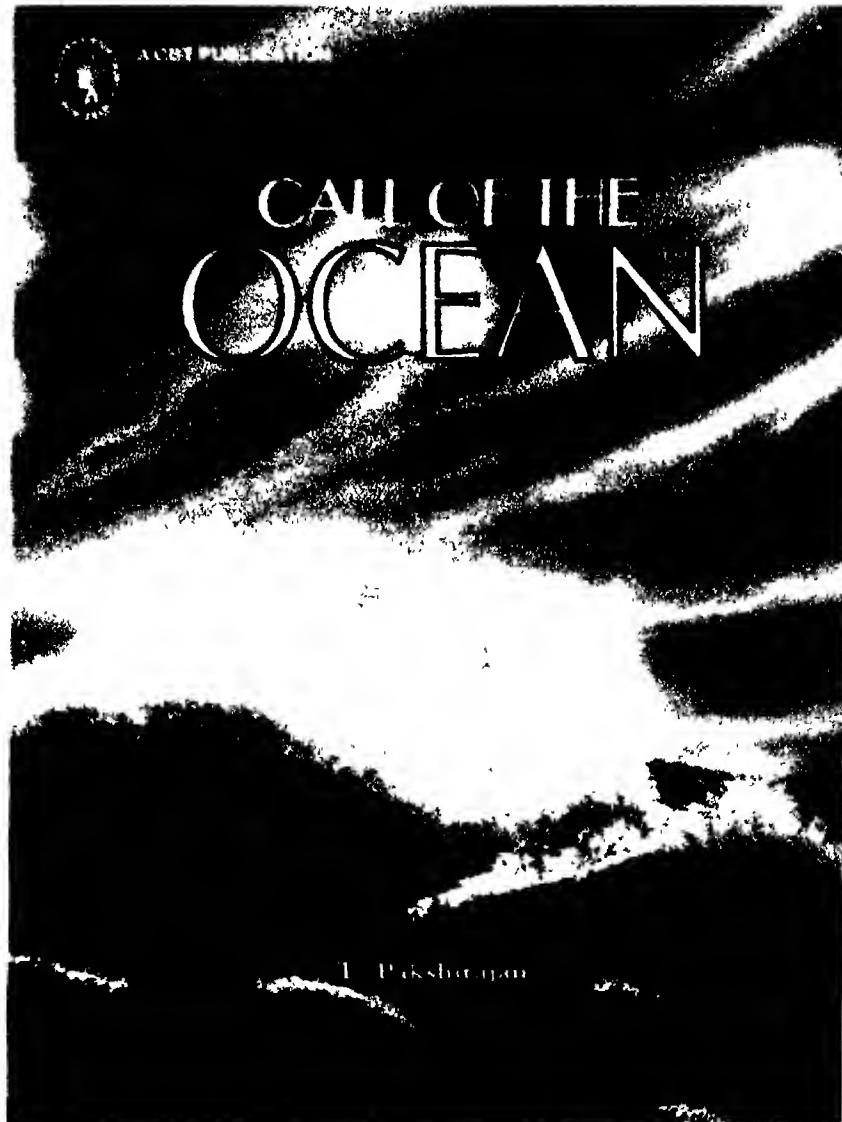
"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity..."

"...we have to labour and to work, and work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments..."

Jawaharlal Nehru

20.7.96

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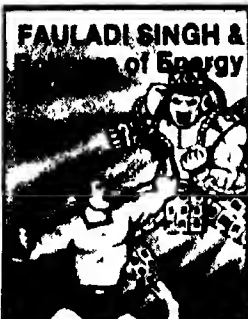
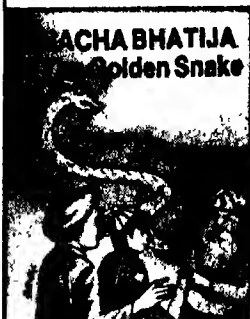
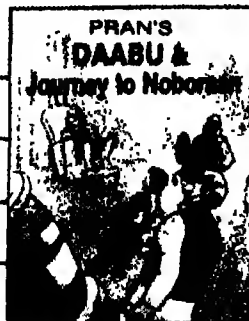
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Dear Editor...

TRIBUTE

The other day I was tidying up my things and a whole pile of *Children's World* tumbled out. My nieces and nephews were here for the holidays. They casually picked up the magazines and glanced through them. For a few days thereafter they read only *Children's World*. Any greater tribute to a children's magazine? Now they regularly buy a copy from the bookstalls.

Kamala Rajan,
Ootacamund

PRIZES PLEASE

I'm regular reader of your magazine *Children's World*. It's quite pleasant reading this magazine.

My friends also take *Children's World*. But we do not find the 'November issue' as enthusiastic as it was till 1994. The November issue does not hold so many stories or jokes, though poems are in the right quantity. It's quite thin as compared to issues of the other months. And you are also not giving prizes to the best entries of the issue. So students don't write with much enthusiasm. We don't mean to say that you should keep huge amounts of money, but small gifts. It's our request to you to award the best entries again.

Sriparna

SUMMARY OF THE WORLD

I am not a regular reader of *Children's World* but recently I

happened to get a copy and found it very interesting. For a long time I was looking forward to making pen-friends but was not familiar with the procedure. The contents of *Children's World* are incredibly amazing and well-defined. They are not only informative but also full of vigour and liveliness. But the pen-friends corner appealed to me the most. It not only helped me to make new friends but also made the mode of correspondence easier. Apart from this, within the magazine it seems as if the whole world has been summarised and printed together.

Senorita,
Uttar Pradesh

All it takes is an article in a magazine to reveal the 'true' feelings of two parties who have all along believed they know each other the best. Ask any student and he/she will tell you all about the teaching styles, the quirks, the dress habits, the gestures of all their subject teachers. Ask any teacher and he/she will tell you with justifiable pride, "We know our students better than their own parents."

Having had the best of teachers in our time, and a repository of the fondest memories of our student days, we are reluctant to put our student-status in the past tense. So, it is with great fondness that we look forward to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's birthday on September 5, to make the most of the occasion of Teachers' Day, so that we can interact with teachers

through *Children's World*.

This year, fresh-out-of-school, Neha Gami and Priya Gupta go back to school for a tete-a-tete with some students and teachers. What we would be interested in now, would be the (to put it literally) behind-the-back buzz to our *Face to Face*... So write back your reactions... "Oh Malhotra Ma'am is so o o o sweet..." "Does X-Teacher really think so? Does she really mean it when she says she wants closer interaction with us...?" etc. etc... As well as, "I am so touched our students want to discuss their personal problems with us..." "We would love to go on picnics and outings with our students," so on and so forth.

Children's World, as some of the letters we receive prove—means different things to different readers—and justly

...Dear Readers

so. If you keep telling us what it is that you would like to see within its pages we just might get overly generous and grant your wish!

Reader Sriparna must have been thrilled to bits with the July issue of the magazine, through which we not only extended the last date for receipt of entries to August 31, but also announced three cash prizes and three commendation prizes, for the November 1996, YOUR PAGES, special issue.

There's time yet, so hurry up and rush your articles. The ones on Nature and Environment might receive additional gifts from CEE.

Happy Teachers Day
and joyful reading

Editor

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Philosopher Educationist

Dr. Radhakrishnan

Text: Dipavali Debroy

Portrait: Beejee

September 5, 1962 marked the 75th birthday of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who had been elected President of India earlier in the year. September 5 was declared officially as Teachers' Day in the same year.

The declaration was an acknowledgment of Radhakrishnan's contribution as a teacher. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it, "I join in paying tribute to our President, Dr. Radhakrishnan. He has served his country in many capacities. But, above all, he is a great teacher from whom all of us have learnt much and will continue to learn. It is India's peculiar privilege to have a great philosopher, a great educationist and a great

humanist as her President. That in itself shows the kind of men we honour and respect."

The one word for Radhakrishnan's teaching career is 'amazing'.

Though originally from Andhra Pradesh, Radhakrishnan was born in 1898 in Tamil Nadu into a family that was neither wealthy nor distinguished. His career as a teacher started in 1909 with an Assistant Lecturership at Madras Presidency College, the lowest grade in the Madras Subordinate Educational Service. To supplement his meagre income, Radhakrishnan had to give tuitions. He published his lectures on psychology in a book form to help students. But he

enjoyed great popularity as the 'Boy Professor'.

In recognition of the scholarly contributions he was steadily making, in 1918 Radhakrishnan was made Professor of Philosophy at the University of Mysore.

In 1921, he was made King George V Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at Calcutta University.

From 1928, Radhakrishnan lectured and taught in Oxford as well, for part of the year. A special chair was created there for him by the rich philanthropist, Spalding. Radhakrishnan taught the English a lot about Eastern Religion and Ethics.

Meanwhile, in 1931, he was made Vice Chancellor,

Andhra University. In 1939, he became Vice Chancellor, Benares Hindu University. But till 1943, he retained his Professorship at Calcutta University. He said in farewell, "I gave the best part of my life to the University of Calcutta and the service of the people of Bengal." The Oxford connection too continued for two decades after 1928, when it had begun.

Soon after Independence, Dr. Radhakrishnan had to take leave of his profession as a teacher.

He now took up a succession of important posts and assignments: the Chairmanship of the University Education Commission in 1948, the leadership of the Indian delegation to the inauguration of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Ambassadorship to the Soviet Union (1949-52), Vice-Presidentship of India (1952-62), Chancellorship of the University of Delhi (1954), and Presidentship

of India (1962-67).

He received signal honours such as the Bharat Ratna from the Government of India and the Desikottama from Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan.

The end came on April 17, 1975, in Madras.

Apart from scholarship and fluency of speech, Dr. Radhakrishnan's humility and diplomacy, are amply revealed by the following 'story'. (Courtesy Dr. M.K. Sen, then with the Oxford University Press)

In Dr. Radhakrishnan's days in Calcutta University, his colleague was the eminent scholar and philosopher, Dr. Surendranath Dasgupta, three years his senior.

Once a student went to Dr. Dasgupta with an answer-script. "Sir, you have given me only 10 out of 100 in this essay I wrote for your tutorial," he complained.

"So?" asked Dr. Dasgupta.

"But, Sir, I wrote it entirely out of Dr. Radhakrishnan's new book."

"I know that," said the mighty professor. "That 10, do you think I gave it to you? I gave it to

Radhakrishnan."

Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* had just been published by Oxford University Press. The enthusiastic young man had bought the book and laden his essay with quotations from it. He had hoped to steal a march over his class-fellows. Instead, there was this shock in store for him

The student, a little mischievously, carried the tale to Dr. Radhakrishnan himself. At first he asked him to autograph the book. The author in Dr. Radhakrishnan gladly obliged. The fellow then went on to say, "I saved my pocket-money to buy this, Sir. And I based my whole essay on this. But just look at the marks it has got! Dr. Dasgupta has given it 10 out of 100, and when I told him it was all your material, he said he knew it and that the 10 marks he had awarded was not to me, but to you."

He expected sparks to fly.

But Dr. Radhakrishnan merely remarked, "If it is Dr. Dasgupta marking

me, I consider even 10 out of 100 an honour. Go and tell him that."

The student scuttled back to Dasgupta who, charmed, at once raised the student's marks to 60.

In 1943, when as its Vice Chancellor, Dr. Radhakrishnan defused the crises in Benaras Hindu University, he was applying the same quiet tact.

In fact, it was his mindset which raised Radhakrishnan so high above pundits, of which India has never been in short supply. His scholarship, impressive as it was, never weighed him down. He was steeped in Indian philosophy and ethics. But he had a very open mind. "We require," he said, "a religion which is both scientific and humanistic. Religion, science, and humanism were sisters in ancient India; They must combine today." He urged people to think for themselves. "In the world of spirit none can see, who does not kindle a light of his own." He warned against prejudice. "We often refuse to admit facts, not

because there is evidence against them, but because there is a theory against them."

He asked people to have compassion. "The worst sinner has a future even as the greatest saint had a past. No one is so good or so bad as he imagines."

He warned people against violence and war. "Our trouble is that society in all countries is in the hands of people who believe in war as an instrument of policy and that of progress in terms of conquest." Again, he stressed the necessity of having an open mind. "If we believe in absurdities, we shall commit atrocities."

Among these and other teachings, was the old precept 'early to bed and early to rise'.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's was 10 p.m., whatever the place or the occasion. K.P.S. Menon, I.C.S. and India's former Ambassador to Moscow, recounts how compulsive this habit was for Dr. Radhakrishnan. At the approach of 10 p.m., in the middle of a diplomatic party,

Dr. Radhakrishnan would get fidgety, tap gently but impatiently on the table in front, hum a *sloka* from the *Gita*, then get up, shake hands with the hostess, and leave! Officers in Kremlin kept this in mind and fixed up Dr. Radhakrishnan's meeting with Stalin at 9 p.m., although the great dictator would himself have preferred midnight.

On November 30, 1965, Dr. Radhakrishnan inaugurated the Children's Book Trust in New Delhi.

Dr. Radhakrishnan possessed the ability to put children at ease, as revealed by his associate. D.S. Sharma, in *Facets of Radhakrishnan*, by B.K. Ahluwalia. Once on his way to Madras, D.S. Sharma and Dr. Radhakrishnan found their first class compartment all empty, except for a boy and a girl. The two were huddled in a corner and looked scared.

Dr. Radhakrishnan guessed the cause at once: the sight of two tall men with buttoned-up long coats and turbans. He began to talk to them and

soon all four were laughing together.

This is not surprising. For, as a teacher, Dr. Radhakrishnan had all along been in tune with the young. All over the world, eminent scholars and philosophers, politicians and statesmen acclaimed

him. Pearl S. Buck congratulated India on electing him as President. Harold Macmillan attended his lectures. Even Stalin was charmed by him. But the best compliment to him came as early as 1921, from his students in Mysore who made him sit in a coach

and pulled it to the station, while tearfully bidding him adieu as he left for Calcutta. That was a spontaneous judgement of young minds, and unerringly it pointed to Dr. Radhakrishnan's true identity. It is this identity that the nation recalls on every Teacher's Day.

Compiled by Anju Khosla

1. Why do bees dry the honey they have collected by flapping their wings?
2. In which part of the honeycomb are the Queen's cells located?
3. What produces the high-pitched hum in the hive?
4. How do bees keep their hives clean?
5. What is the size and shape of a honeycomb cell?
6. What is the shape of a bee's egg?
7. What is bee larva fed on?
8. What does the 'dancing' of the bee indicate?
9. What is known as the 'swarm day'?
10. How long does the Queen Bee live?
11. How many varieties of bees are there on the earth?
12. Who are the enemies of the bee?
13. Who was Professor K. von Frisch?
14. How many eggs does the Queen lay?
15. How long does a bee live?



It's A Man's Life

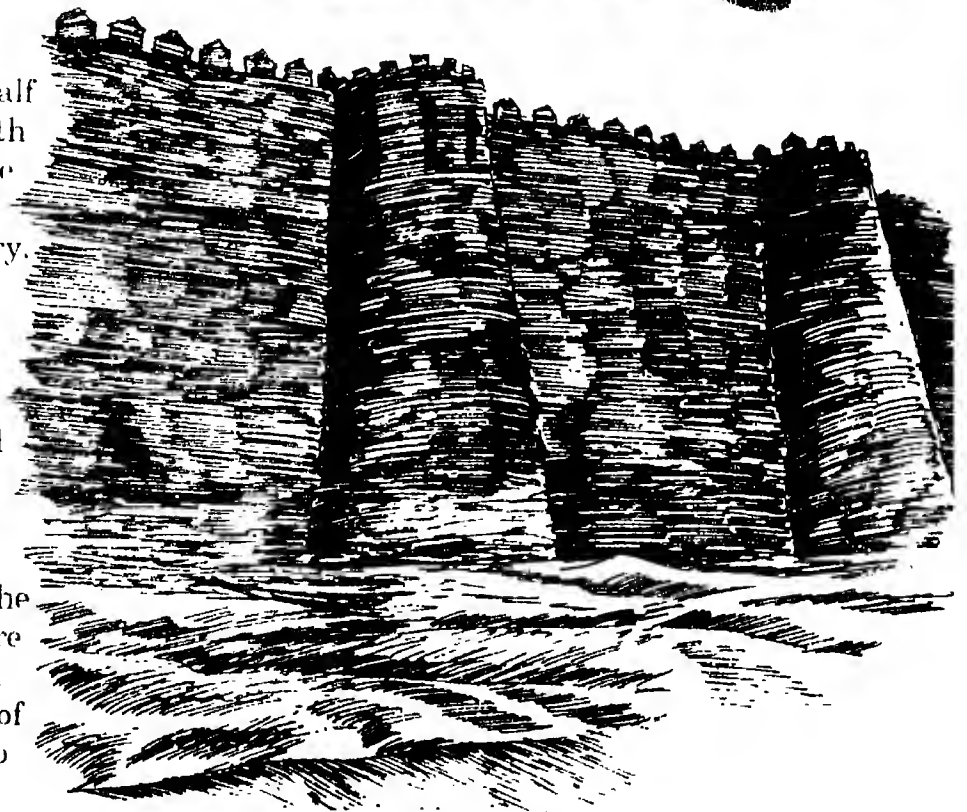
*Life is an inexplicable experience,
'A period of existence
'In this self-centred, egoistic world
'A short span of vitality
'Where man, in his worldly greed,
Gives an inch, and takes an ell,
Some in unlimited luxury,
'And others drowned in poverty,
Making their debut, innocent and fresh
'Then bidding farewell to the earth
'After lasting bitter and sweet
acknowledgement
'A few renowned, basking in glory,
but mostly insignificant,
'Unimportant to the rest of mankind
Going on in brisk activity,
'Anxious, tense and worried
'About what tomorrow has in store
'In humanity's selfish way,
Each wrapped up in their troubles
'Indifferent and unconcerned
'About the rest of the world
Is this what man's life is all about ?*

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (12)
Illustrations: Pijush Dutta

Story: Krishna
Narayan
Illustrations: Nilabha
Dhar Chowdhury

*Young Prithviraj
Chandola leaves his
village in order to join the
British army but loses his
way, his horse and nearly
his life. He is rescued by
Senor Noronha who is on
his way back after
plundering a small
kingdom*

THE LATTER half of the eighteenth century was one of the most turbulent periods in Indian history. With the death of Aurangzeb, the mighty Mughal emperor, the Mughal empire that spanned the length and breadth of India and dominated the land for over two centuries, was steadily breaking up. The latter day emperors were poor rulers. Drunk with luxury and enamoured of soft living, they failed to learn to retain their



power. So it was that in the year 1787, Shah Alam II, descendant of the great Jalaluddin Akbar, sat on a tottering throne, clinging to an empire that extended no further than the outskirts of Delhi.

With the vacuum of power at the centre, every prince, every chieftain and village headman became a law unto himself and preyed on the hapless citizens to extract whatever he could. The system of local administration collapsed. Land was left untilled. Canals and waterways were allowed to run dry. The rural population, in despair, turned to banditry. To cap it all, there descended from across the seas, a horde of foreign adventurers like Senor Noronha with modern weaponry, who stole and plundered at will. Afghans, Rajputs, Sikhs, Marathas and other warring castes turned central India into a theatre of destruction.

A product of these turbulent times was the Afghan, Ismail Beg, a young, footloose adventurer in search of a fortune. He had rich and powerful connections, notably an uncle in Shah Alam's court, who

provided him with some money and fighting men and bade him to go forth and fend for himself.

Ismail Beg hoped to find his fortune in the fort of Kumbher. It was a little kingdom, inconspicuously tucked away among the plateaus of north Deccan, distant enough to escape the ravages of Mughals during their campaigns. Ismail Beg hoped to capture Kumbher, and thereby lay his hands on a rich hoard of treasure.

The extent of Kumbher's wealth was not widely known. The present king, Raja Balwant Singh, came of a succession of Rajputs who had ruled Kumbher wisely and well. Unnoticed by predators, the little kingdom had grown and prospered, and the coffers of the royal house had swelled till the contents were said to be more resplendent and valuable than those which lay in the strongroom within the Red Fort, the abode of Shah Alam himself.



It was night. The palace and the fort of Kumbher were bathed in the soft light of the moon. The air hung heavy with

the scent of jasmine and roses that flowered in the palace garden. In his bedchamber, Raja Balwant Singh tossed and turned, unable to sleep. His brain was crowded with a thousand thoughts, a thousand vexing questions that had no answers. Driven by anxiety, he threw the bedclothes aside and rose from his cot. He went down the corridor and ascended the spiral staircase that led to the terrace in the east wing of the palace. Leaning against the parapet, he cast his gaze beyond the palace grounds and surveyed the city of Kumbher from which his kingdom took its name.

The city had grown on three sides of a large, gently sloping hill. The fort was built on the rise of the hill, overlooking the city. At the rear of the fort stood the palace, and behind the palace was a waste of rockstrewn country, scored by deep ravines, ending in cliffs several hundred feet high. The geography of Kumbher provided it with a unique natural defence that discouraged any invader, perhaps the reason why Kumbher had been left alone for so long.

In the midst of the surrounding depredation and anarchy, Kumbher shone like a jewel in a mudheap. The tax officials were just, the granaries were full. In his eighteen years as king, Raja Balwant Singh had extended and strengthened his frontiers, and bought peace with his neighbours. He had pruned his army to a compact and efficient fighting force.

The king's eyes scanned beyond the limits of the city. He could see nothing in the darkness, but he knew that somewhere over the horizon loomed the latest threat to the sovereignty of Kumbher. The king's spies had already apprised him of Ismail Beg's intentions to march against him.

Raja Balwant Singh passed a hand over his brow. He was tired. His once indomitable spirit now detested the very idea of war; his body now groaned in protest. Raja Balwant Singh was never thrilled at the prospect of vanquishing an opponent, for he knew that sorrow and death alone were the true fruits of war. He wanted peace.

"I am getting old," said



the king to himself. He heard footsteps behind him. He turned, one hand on the parapet. It was Jai Singh, his son.

Jai Singh, at twenty, was already a strapping young man, taller than his father. His eyes were bold and open, his chin firm. The king's heart filled with pride at the sight of his son. He saw in him an earlier image of himself, a worthy successor to the throne of Kumbher.

Jai Singh touched his father on the shoulder. "You haven't slept, father," he said accusingly.

"Sleep?" the king smiled wryly. "How can I sleep? Tell me, why haven't you slept?" He waved his hand in the direction of the plains, the direction from which Ismail Beg would launch his offensive. "You are as worried as I am, are you not?"

There was a pause as father and son gazed at the city below, at the clusters of brown houses and the shadows of criss-crossing streets. "These are bad times, son," said the king. "The laws of the land have long since been buried. Men have become beasts. I am concerned

not so much for myself as for you and Chandravati, and for Kumbher."

"But father, we have a stronghold in Madhoji Sindhu. Why don't we ask him for help? Ismail Beg dare not attack us if he knew that he would have to face Madhoji as well!"

Madhoji Sindhu was a legendary Maratha general, commander of a large fighting force, a man who even nursed ambitions of displacing Shah Alam and establishing Maratha rule at Delhi.

Raja Balwant Singh shook his head. "Madhoji is in no position to help us at the moment," he said. "He has lately suffered serious defeats, one after the other. I understand he is now camped at Deeg, recouping his losses, waiting for the ill-winds to blow over. No, my son, we will have to face Ismail Beg ourselves."

Jai Singh walked along the terrace, his head bowed. He looked down again at the city, and thought of his subjects—the men, women and children who slept soundly in their homes, secure in the belief that their king would protect them. Jai Singh felt the

weight of the responsibility on his shoulders, and understood the cause of his father's anxiety.

From the corner of his eye he noticed the heavy curtains of the doorway draw apart. A silhouette appeared on the landing, hesitated, then approached. It was Chandravati, daughter of Raja Balwant Singh, and Jai Singh's younger sister. In the dim light her skin shone like ivory, her tresses gleamed and flowed to her knees in a dark river. The beauty and nobility of her ancestry sprang forth from every line, every curve of her face and figure.

At the moment, however, her face mirrored her concern. "What are both of you doing here at this time of the night?" she asked. "Is something wrong?"

"Wrong? Nothing whatsoever," replied the king. "We were only wondering which lucky man was going to claim the hand of our princess!"

"Father!" exclaimed Chandravati with mock severity, and blushed. She took her father's face in her hands. "You worry too much," she said. "Come, let us go to bed."

Raja Balwant Singh turned to his son. "Take your sister down, will you? I will follow in a while."

Jai Singh opened his mouth to protest, but the expression on his father's face stopped him. He escorted his sister across the terrace towards her chamber. Raja Balwant Singh was alone once more.

In the shadows of the night, he allowed himself to unlock from his breast his deepest fear regarding the safety of Kumbher. For, it was neither Ismail Beg nor Shah Alam who posed a threat to his kingdom. The enemy lay within. The enemy was none other than his own flesh and blood—his elder sister, Janki Devi.

More than once Raja Balwant Singh had been tempted to voice his fears to his son, but had refrained at the last moment. Janki Devi was disloyal to the throne, of that he had no doubt. The king needed proof, not circumstantial evidence, however damning. Until then, he dare not poison the mind of Jai Singh.

The incident that first caused him to suspect Janki Devi had occurred almost a year ago. That

morning the king had cut short his *darbar* (court) to visit his sister. Janki Devi and her son, Kunwar Singh, stayed separately in a large mansion outside the palace walls. Traditionally, the royal house of Kumbher lived under one roof, but Janki Devi had chosen to break the tradition.

The front rooms of the mansion were deserted, and so the king had strolled into Janki Devi's private apartments, unannounced. He had

found Janki Devi deep in conversation with a stranger. The look of stark guilt on their faces and the quivering rage with which Janki Devi had ordered him out of her residence, convinced the king that he had interrupted a private and very dubious discussion.

Raja Balwant Singh had his men follow the stranger out of Kumbher. He was identified as Rukhayat Khan's nephew. Rukhayat Khan was his bitter foe. The



incident had caused the king many a sleepless night.

The second incident was more recent, Janki Devi had proceeded from Kumbher to visit the Kali temple at Chirania. It was a monthly ritual with her, and Raja Balwant Singh had not given it a thought until one of his spies reported to him that Janki Devi had been sighted at Najibabad, nowhere near Chirania. The chieftain of the Najibabad fort was none other than Rukhayat

Khan!

The king had waited for an explanation on Janki Devi's return; she said nothing.

Separate incidents, not very significant in themselves, but put together, they were indicative of a deep design. The king believed Janki Devi was working against him. Raja Balwant Singh was a fair man. He knew that suspicion was a cancer that tormented and destroyed the individual. It was not right to expose

Jai Singh to that deadly disease.

The eastern sky was beginning to light up with the first blush of dawn. Raja Balwant Singh shifted his feet. His joints ached from standing immobile for so long. He cast another long look at his city before turning away.

'She is beautiful,' he said to himself. 'She is like a beautiful woman, coveted by one and all. But he who lays his claim on Kumbher will do so over my dead body.'

(To be continued)

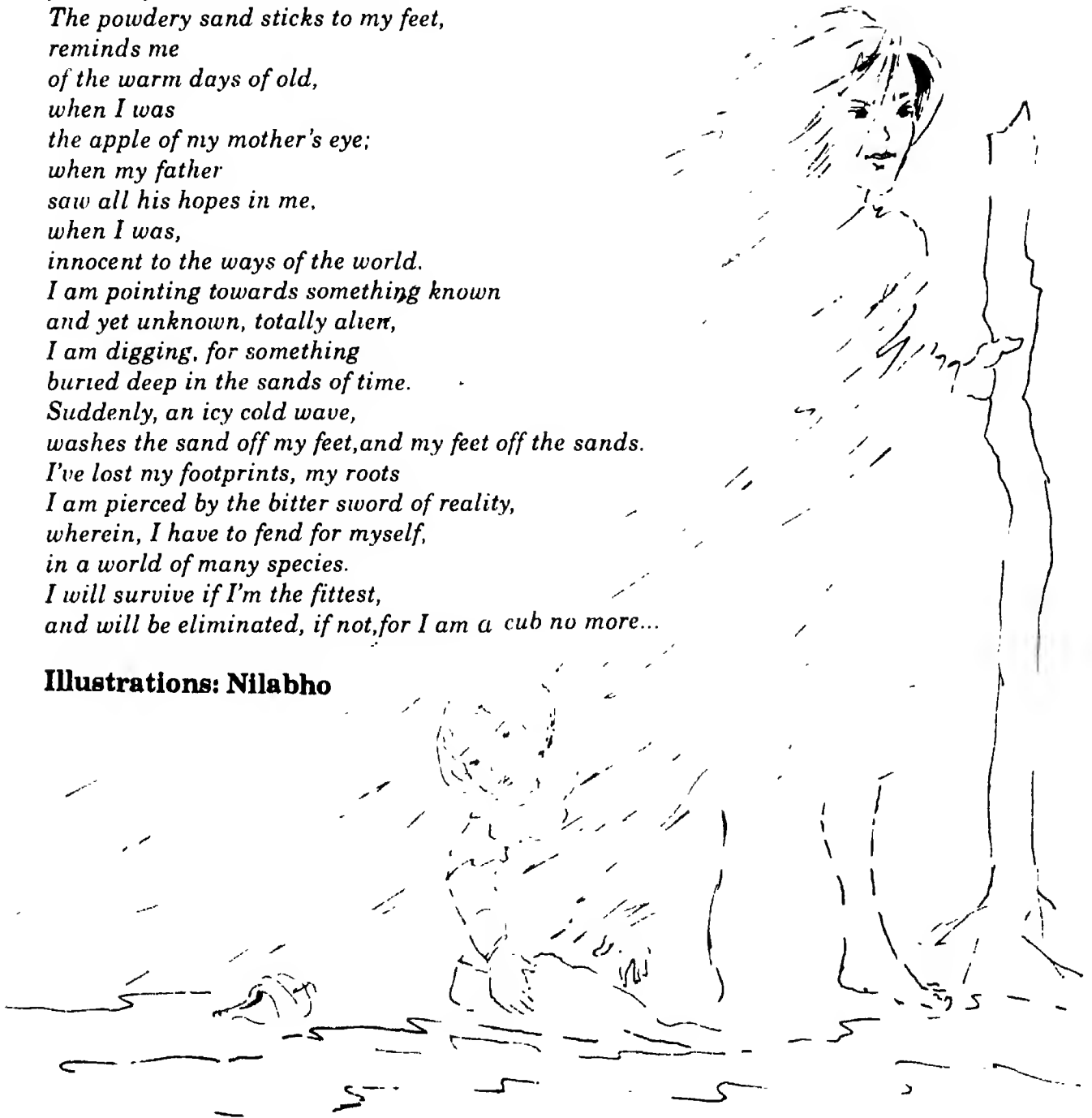


A Cub No More

Arti Kapur (16)

*Sitting under the sky
of a starless night,
I walk down
the sandy beach of memory
Memories of love, happiness
fun and frolic revolve around me
The powdery sand sticks to my feet,
reminds me
of the warm days of old,
when I was
the apple of my mother's eye;
when my father
saw all his hopes in me,
when I was,
innocent to the ways of the world.
I am pointing towards something known
and yet unknown, totally alien,
I am digging, for something
buried deep in the sands of time.
Suddenly, an icy cold wave,
washes the sand off my feet, and my feet off the sands.
I've lost my footprints, my roots
I am pierced by the bitter sword of reality,
wherein, I have to fend for myself,
in a world of many species.
I will survive if I'm the fittest,
and will be eliminated, if not, for I am a cub no more...*

Illustrations: Nilabho



So Long, **BAMBI!**



Story: Sudha Sanjeev
Illustrations: Subir Roy

I WAS awake. I lay in bed making no move to get up. The sound of the rain falling and the smell of the wet earth was all I was aware of. Rain is an auspicious sign, granny often says. Auspicious? How could death be auspicious? Or were the gods weeping with us?

I knew I should get up, but I was reluctant. It had been a difficult night. More than the stress of watching Bambi suffer and Blake agonize was the decision the whole family had come to—Bambi must die.

Tomorrow. No, that is, today. It would be kinder, we told ourselves. Kinder to Bambi. To us. Perhaps, to Blake too.

Blake walked into the room restlessly. Blake, our majestic mongrel, black and white. "Blake?" People would ask us quizzically. "Sexton Blake, we suppose," they would joke. "No," we would say in dead seriousness, "William Blake."

Blake stood, placing his front legs on the windowsill that looked to Bambi's room. Cocking his head to a side, he listened and

whined alternately. He knew, as only a soulmate could, that her end was near.

Getting Blake was an impulsive decision. Mom was totally against keeping dogs. But we were keen—Dad and the two of us. So Blake just happened one day. He was three months old.

A few months later when we, minus Dad, were returning by train from a holiday, a family friend met us with the most heart-stopping gift—an adorable pup with spots. (To this day, I suspect the unseen hand of Dad's in this) She shot into our arms and hearts, and snuggled in. But not Mom's. Moms are made of fiercer stuff.

At home, Blake awaited us—a young, hot-blooded bundle of energy. We witnessed the whole gamut of his emotions—his joy on seeing us, his wariness of the new addition, the suspicion, the puzzlement, the sniffing, the circumambulations, the grudging acceptance; but never, not once, was there rejection.

Bambi settled in, as only a blue-blooded aristocrat could, calmly elegant from the tip of her

three-month nose to her pointed tail. They were a picture in contrasts. Blake, all noise and enthusiasm, warm, wet licks and hysterical barking, thoroughly indis disciplined, demanding attention; ecstatic and deliriously happy when he got it. Bambi, dignified and 'propah' with the grace of a panther, total economy of movement and an air of unrivalled superiority. When Blake wanted something, he

whined, pawed, barked, grovelled, sulked. When Bambi wanted something, Bambi simply took.

We had been trying in vain to get Blake to catch a rat. When he saw a rat, he charged at it barking and snapping vigorously. He chased it madly, turning corners, falling flat on his chin, his legs splayed in different directions, clambering up again, (his nails making the sound of a shower of pebbles on a tin roof) only



to find that he had lost sight of his target. 'All thunder and fury, signifying nothing!'

Bambi, meanwhile, would watch these frenzied attempts with an imperial, impassive gaze. No flicker of emotion touched her. But if the unfortunate rodent strayed her way, then 'splat'! One swipe of her paw and it was a dead duck (sorry, rat!).

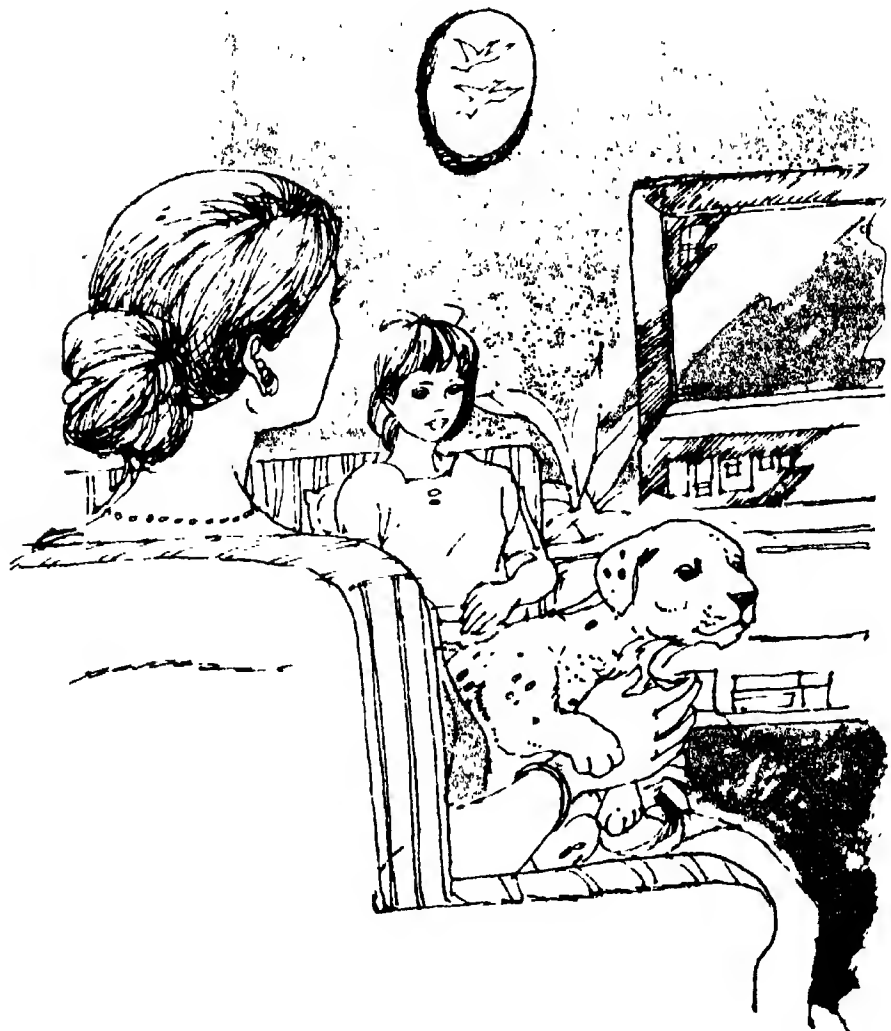
Blake would reach the spot some dog years later, look abashed at the sight of the corpse, treating it with far more caution than he did while it lived; and switch into the reverse gear trying to escape Bambi's steady gaze that seemed to pin him down.

Bambi's hunting instinct and moves came as a bit of a shock to us too. The crows in the neighbourhood had a merry time teasing Blake who ran crazily after them in the garden. One morning Dad and my sister were taking the dogs for a walk. Dad had Bambi on a leash. Expecting Bambi to react like Blake, the crows swooped down and away. Before Dad could turn around, there was a 'snap'. Bambi had a crow

in her mouth. My sister, screaming so the skies almost fell down, tried to prise Bambi's jaws apart. Dad—normally a picture of equanimity—shouted repeatedly at Bambi to let go. Blake, the mutt, in more ways than one, ran around in circles, snapping at my sister's ankles, barking hysterically. As usual, way off target! After that day, the crows in our neighbourhood were

certainly a 'wiser but a sadder' lot.

It was Mom who succumbed to Bambi more than any of us. Every evening during television time Bambi would enter and survey the room with its occupants, that is, us. She would head straight for Mom and climb into her lap. Mom would, equally firmly, pick her up and put her down. Just as Mom settled down again,



Bambi would rise, walk up to Mom and jump again into her lap. None of us breathed, though we watched this battle of wills through the corner of our eyes.

The first sign of a dent in Mom's armour came when one evening, she inadvertently picked Bambi up and put her in her lap. Four heads, including Blake's, turned from the TV to her. "She's very small," said Mom, flushing guiltily.

Several more months passed. Bambi grew a degree taller than Blake, which could not have done much for his ego. They had the normal sibling rivalry, with Blake vying for Mom's attention too.

Bambi fell ill. She was out of sorts, listless. Mom shifted her to her room. Blake went too. The vet gave her medicines. Mom and Blake shared the nightly vigil. Things were just not right. One night, Bambi had convulsions. Mom held her. Blake soothed her and licked her, cleaning her, warming her, comforting her. We changed doctors.

"Distemper," the new vet said. "Not much I can do. It's in an advanced stage. Don't let the other

dog near her. It's highly infectious."

Then came a cycle of injections, convulsions, medicines, holding Bambi in our arms, feeding her and being with her. Blake took his position at my window-sill, unable to comprehend the isolation.

The vet was understanding but quite firm too. "I'm sorry, Mrs. S. I've done all I can. Sometimes it is more humane, kinder to end her suffering. Please, Mrs. S, let Bambi go." We looked at him, stricken. "Think about it and take a decision."

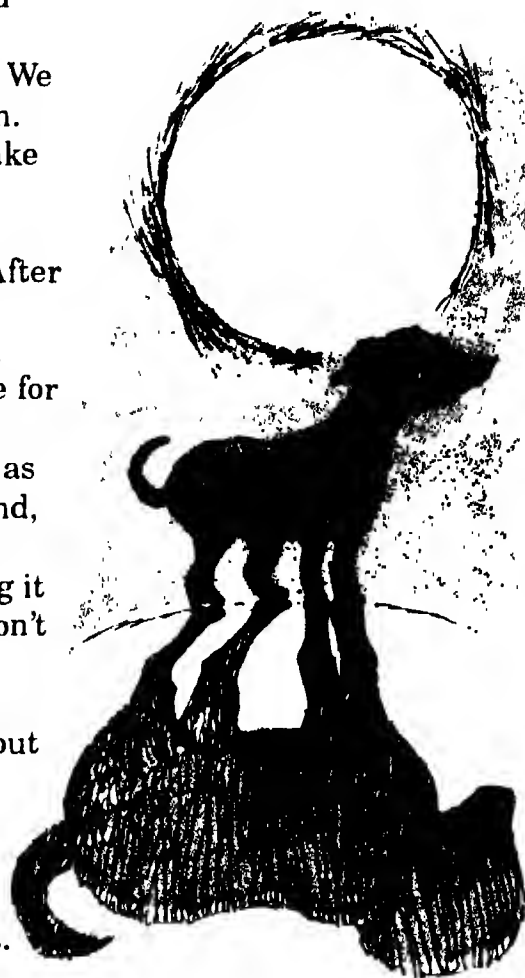
Last night I gave Bambi her medicine. After we took the decision. I came back to my room and sat stroking Blake for a long time. I tried to convince him as much as myself. "You understand, Blake? She's suffering now. In pain. Why drag it on? You understand, don't you?"

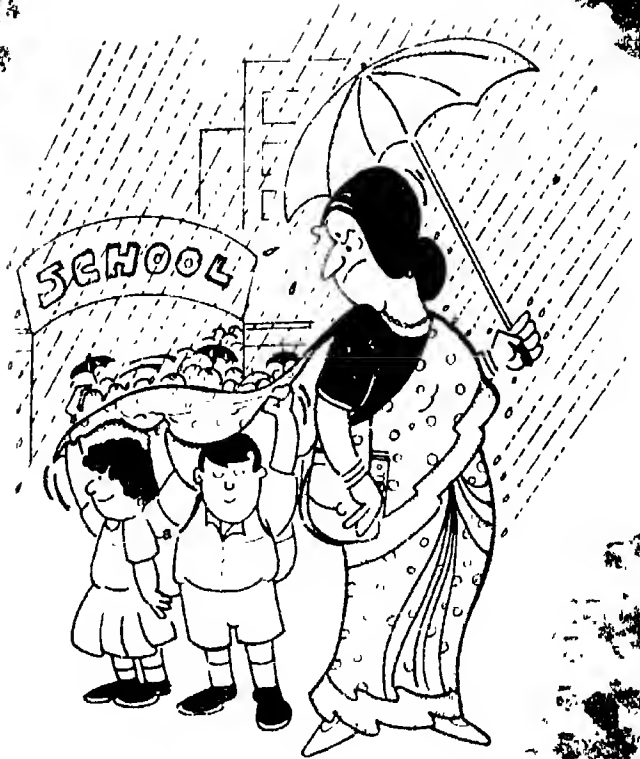
It went on raining. Suddenly Mom called out to everybody from her room, "Come quickly, quickly. I think she's going."

I didn't go. I couldn't. Blake whined at the window. Why exist for ten months? Why?

★

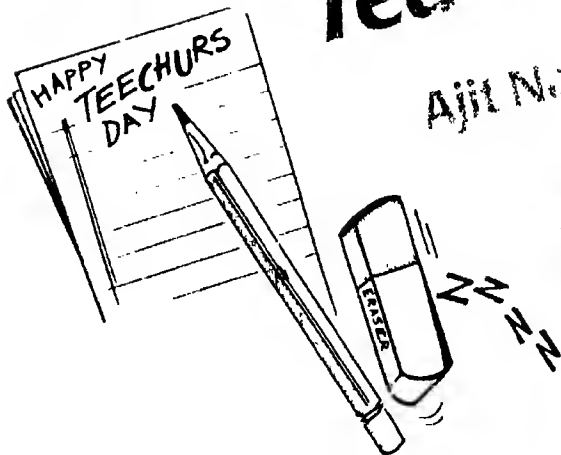
Bambi died. She spared us the trauma of carrying out our difficult decision. Blake lived on for fourteen years—a full life—a constant companion to Mom, her possessive watchdog, loved and loving. Bambi changed Mom's dislike to love. Perhaps for that alone she lived. She did her work well. So long, Bambi. Sleep well.

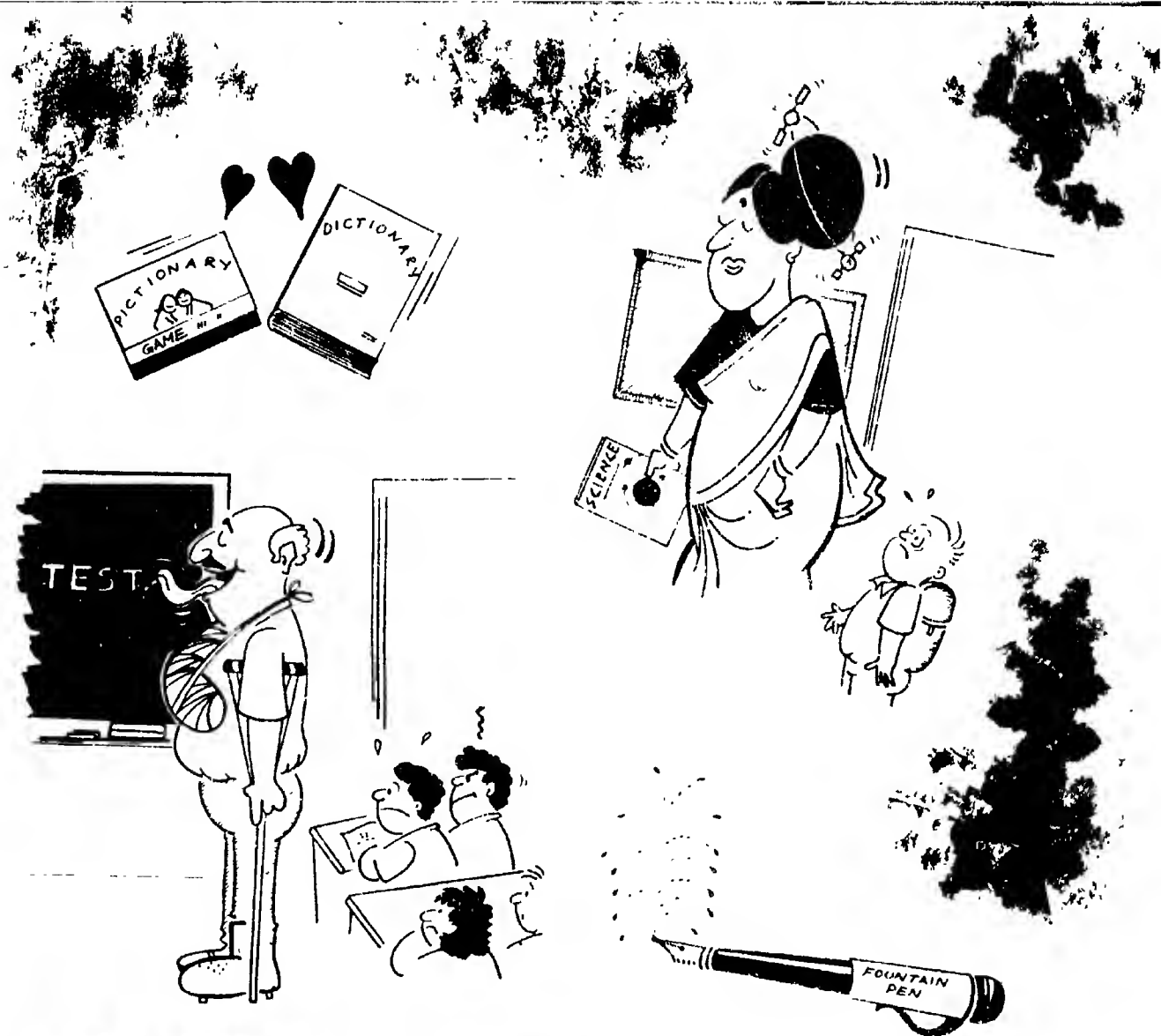




Three Cheers For Teachers!!!

Ajit Narayan





Be patient, understanding
Ms Tishya Kumar
Kendriya Vidyalaya, JNU Campus

Be able to control the class
Shilpa, XII, Commerce
Have an air of authority
Harshleen, XII, Commerce

Share a good rapport with students
Anureet, XII, Commerce
Be understanding and patient
Richa, XII
Mater Dei School

Control the class without physically
punishing us. Teach the subject well, and in
detail. Listen to us
Yasmeen, Meenakshi, Sunil, Ashok—Class X
NDMC School

Be good in teaching Must be polite and
understanding.
Shipra, XII
Be able to understand students, share their
problems and willing to take pains
Nishant, XII
Be well qualified and able to communicate
Parul Nijhawan, XII
Bharti Public School

Be caring and make the class interesting
Debolina, Supriya, Vikram, Mamta, Anita
XII Arts
Be honest, have good knowledge of her
subject, and interact with her students on a
one to one basis
Karan, Kaveri, Manisha
XII Commerce, Science
Modern School

Be caring, earn respect rather than demand it,
come down to our level.

Be smiling, frank, understanding, cheerful
with a good power of communication
XII, Commerce
Kendriya Vidyalaya

An ideal student is one who
Is intelligent with a quick grasp
Mrs. Jayabalan
Is academically good, humble, modest, loving
Mrs. Khillani
Is naughty but obedient
Mrs. Bagchi
Is loyal, remembers us even in his success
Mrs. Biswas
Is frank, confiding
Mrs. Anandi
Mater Dei School



Responsive
Mrs. Kusum Salwan
NDMC School

May not know everything, but who
nevertheless tries to answer questions
Ms Shweta Bhanot, Ms Mamta
Is successful in academics
Mrs. Neelam Sharma
Applies knowledge to life
Ms Shalini Batra
Bharti Public School

Is self disciplined
Ms Anuradha Puri
Can achieve goals
Mrs. Sarita
Is able to open up freely and communicate
with their teachers on a personal level, at the
same time remembering that she is a teacher
and deserves respect.
Mrs Sunita Kapoor
Modern School

Is disciplined, attentive
Mrs. Rama Kapoor
 Is respectful, hardworking
Mrs. S.P. Sharma
 Is alert, responsive
Ms Manjula Srivastava
 Is sincere and devoted
Ms Tishya Kumar
Kendriya Vidyalaya

How important is academics?
 Important, but physical development is as vital
Mrs Jayabalan
 More important is personality development.
 Extra curricular activities must complement studies.
Mrs. Khillani, Mrs. Bagchi, Mrs. Anandi
 Very important
Mrs. Biswas
Mater Dei School

Academics is given hardly any importance by our students
Mrs. Kusum Salwan
NDMC School

Our educational system recognizes only marks
Ms Shalini Batra
 Vital in our competitive world
Ms Mamta
Bharti Public School

Makes 60% of the human being
Ms Anuradha Puri
 Helps widen your vision
Ms Anuradha Handa
 Not very important as being the best in academics does not mean that one will do well in life
Mrs. Sarita
Modern School

Must be first priority
Mrs. S.P. Sharma
 Makes you self reliant
Ms Manjula Srivastava
 Can help financially and socially backward families to make something of their lives
Mrs. Tishya Kumar
Kendriya Vidyalaya

Academics is quite important. A student's first priority
Shilpa
 Not so important
Harshleen
 Essential for life
Anureet
 A means to get to one's goal of a good career
Richa
Mater Dei School

Essential to make money and a good reputation. Academics is the only channel by which one can rise, and earn those facilities that our parents could not provide us with
Yasmeen, Meenakshi, Sunil, Ashok
NDMC School

Helps make one's career and develop one's personality
Shipra, Nishant
 Indispensable. We have no hope for a bright future especially when it comes to finding a match for marriage
Parul Nijhawan
 Helps make one's career and to know what is happening in the world around you
Parul Jain
 Makes us more civilized and successful in life
Smridul Batra
Bharti Public School

Limited. Only a means to get admission in a good college
Debolina, Supriya, Vikram, Mamta, Anita



Very important. Goes a long way in making a career

Karan, Kaveri, Manisha

Modern School

Will help us to achieve something on our own but the pressure is always there

XI and XII, Commerce

Kendriya Vidyalaya

What could a student do and
Teacher do?

Playing games together. The coordination and understanding required to play as a team would bring us closer

Mrs. Jayabalan

Clubs and extra curricular activities involving both

Mrs. Khullani

Lower student-teacher ratio

Mrs. Bagchi

Summer trips and outings

Mrs. Biswas

Mater Dei School



Showing them films and taking them for outings

Mrs. Kusum Salwan

NDMC School

Eating together, debating

Ms Shweta Bhanot

Discussions, picnics, outings

Mrs. Neelam Sharma

Clubs, performing experiments together

Ms Shalini Batra

Seminars, special classes

Ms Mamta

Bharti Public School

Outings like rock climbing and trekking

Ms Anuradha Puri

Respecting students' opinions

Mrs. Sarita

Free interaction between students and teachers

Mrs Surita Kapoor

Modern School

Spending more time on non-academic activities

Mrs. Rama Kapoor

Give and take on both sides

Mrs. S.P. Sharma

Lesser number of students in a class

Ms Manjula Srivastava

Kendriya Vidyalaya

Going out on picnics

Shulpa

Spend more time with teachers outside school

Harshleen

Mater Dei School

Going out with teachers, playing with them and discussing personal issues with them.

More conversations in class with teachers.

Yasmeen, Meenakshi, Sunil, Ashok

NDMC School

Picnics, tours

Shipra, Parul Jain

Sharing problems with teachers

Nishant

Educational trips, picnics and zero periods when students and teachers can talk freely

Parul Nijhawan

Bharti Public School

Friendly and open discussions, interaction. If teachers kept our problems confidential, we would be able to confide in them more

Debolina, Supriya, Vikram, Mamta, Anita

More qualitative interaction

Karan, Kaveri, Manisha

Modern School

Going out with teachers and spending time with them

Class XI

Picnics, long trips

Class XII

Kendriya Vidyalaya

One thing that I would like to change

The students' pessimistic attitude towards life because a positive approach helps increase the chances of success

Mrs. Khillani

I wouldn't want to change anything about the students. In fact it is the elders and teachers who have to change to be able to keep up with today's youngsters.

Mrs. Bagchi

Bring back the value system which is vanishing.

Mrs. Biswas

The students' attraction to and fixation with the media. This can be achieved only through reasoning and not dictating terms.

Mrs. Anandi

Mater Dei School

Make my students study at home

Mrs. Kusum Salwan

NDMC School

Instil more dignity in students and return them to the Indian culture

Ms Shweta Bhanot

Make students feel more at ease with teachers

Mrs. Neelam Sharma

More observant and inquisitive students

Ms Shalini Batra

Greater involvement by students in extra curricular activities

Ms Mamta

Bharti Public School

Make parents realize that showering children

with money instead of their presence leads to a complete erosion of values taught in school

Ms Anuradha Puri

Students' materialistic attitude. For them status has become more important than values.

Mrs. Sarita

Students should use all possible exposure at home, in school and the media to develop a broader vision and personality.

Mrs. Sunita Kapoor

Modern School

Develop a respect in students for teachers not for the marks they give but for themselves

Mrs. S.P. Sharma

Remove arrogance in students. Restrict TV viewing.

Ms Manjula Srivastava

Teach students to listen

Mrs. Tishya Kumar

Kendriya Vidyalaya

Teachers should treat students as friends

Shilpa

Greater personal involvement by teachers

Harshleen

More communication with students

Anureet

Mater Dei School

Stop physical punishment. More caring teachers. End favouritism.

Yasmeen, Meenakshi, Sunil, Ashok

NDMC School

Have more friendly teachers

Shipra

Have teachers who scold less

Nishant

Make sure that teachers stay for a long spell in school so that they can have a closer relationship with students

Parul Nijhawan, XII

More understanding teachers

Parul Jain

Bharti Public School

We wouldn't like to change anything. They are 'perfect angels'!

Debolina, Supriya, Vikram, Mamta, Anita

Teaching should be less mechanical. A personal 'touch' would make it more interesting

Karan, Kaveri, Manusha

Modern School

Remove favouritism and partiality

Class XI

Have teachers who respect our individuality

Class XII

Kendriya Vidyalaya

In today's fast-paced techno-age, developing character, conscience, principles and values becomes even more important. Teachers can contribute by being not only more open and approachable but also show more interest and concern in their students personally.

The students should reciprocate equally with more sincerity, devotion, sensitivity and, most importantly, respect for their teachers. These virtues seem to be getting diffused generation by generation.

Today, we need to use the forces of globalization, media and economies, among others, to unify and open up minds and not as detrimental distractions.





Story: Sunanda Kathalay

Illustrations: Pijush Dutta

I HAD to write a speech on pollution. I came home from school and began to think. What should I write on a topic that everyone knows a great deal about but doesn't really understand? I felt very sleepy and closed my eyes for a moment.

Suddenly the door flew open and two hideous creatures walked in. They had the most peculiar features that I had ever seen. As they advanced towards me, I trembled with fear.

"Have you come from some other planet to attack us?" I asked in a quavering voice.

"Another planet?" one of them said, a bit perplexed. He sounded just like a human.

"No! We are from Earth," said the other.

"Earth?" I nearly shouted with surprise. I had never heard of or seen such ugly creatures.

"You seem to be of superior intelligence, just like humans. Are you a reptile or an amphibian?" I ventured, eyeing the scales on their bodies.

"No, no! We are humans. In fact I am related to you," said the first one.

"My relative!" I mumbled.

"Yes, I am your great, great, great grandson. We have come from the future," he said.

I was flabbergasted, to put it mildly.

"What is this?" I asked touching the trunk-like thing which was hanging

from his face.

"Oh! This! This is my nose," he said.

"Nose?"

"Yes, you see due to lack of oxygen our noses have evolved to become bigger to take in more air and absorb whatever oxygen is in the atmosphere," he said.

"And our lungs have become bigger too," said the other.

"But why are there scales on your body and what is that thick transparent membrane on your eyes?" I questioned.

"We developed this scaly skin and eye membrane to protect our body from all the pollution you have given us."

"You see, we had to adapt our body to the

changing environment to survive," added the other.

I was speechless.

"Since you cut down trees and made life difficult for us, we have come here to remove all trees and take them away, so we can get more oxygen in our time," he said.

"No, no! You mustn't!" I pleaded. "What will happen to us then?"

"Why should we care?

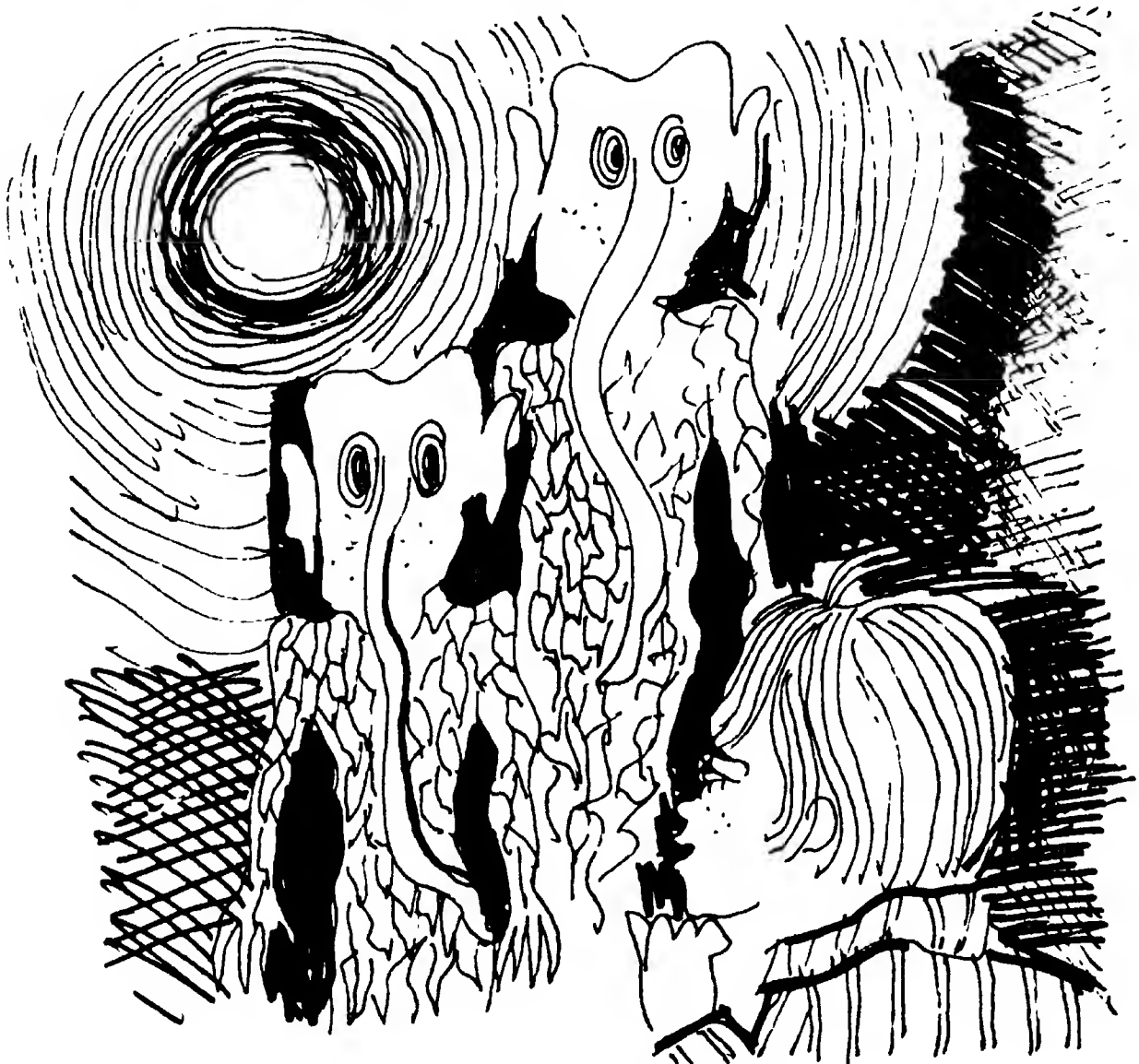
You never cared for us," he said and they walked out. I ran after them, but they had disappeared in the thick fog outside.

"Oh! Where can I find them? Where can I find them?" I wondered as I searched for them. Suddenly I stumbled on a small stone and went rolling down the hill. There were no trees to break my fall. I banged my head against

something hard and woke up to see that I had fallen from my chair.

I had had a nightmare. But it had all seemed so real. I was determined to speak strongly on pollution the next day, to tell my friends of the future that awaited the coming generations because of our thoughtlessness.

I certainly don't want such a future. Do you?



Trip to Toyland



Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

Popguns have been in use for long. Generations of children have been shooting corks or pellets with them. Also with water-guns. In our country you see them during Holi. Children are trigger-happy then, shooting jets of water at whosoever is within range.

At Diwali there are toy pistols or revolvers to burst crackers. A few get the latest guns which emit sparks as they shoot.

The newest in the range of 'fun guns' is the bubble gun. From its muzzle foam out soap bubbles.

Now and then you may

have seen a little boy dressed as a cowboy, complete with a toy gun in a holster. Or he may be toting a gun that crackles when he presses the trigger.

Yes, all these, and some more, are guns that are in great demand. But some people look at it differently. Though toys, these guns remind them of war and violence.

War toys, as they are called, have always existed. Guns were invented only a few centuries back. Before that the children played with toy soldiers, bows and arrows.

All through history people fought wars. Our

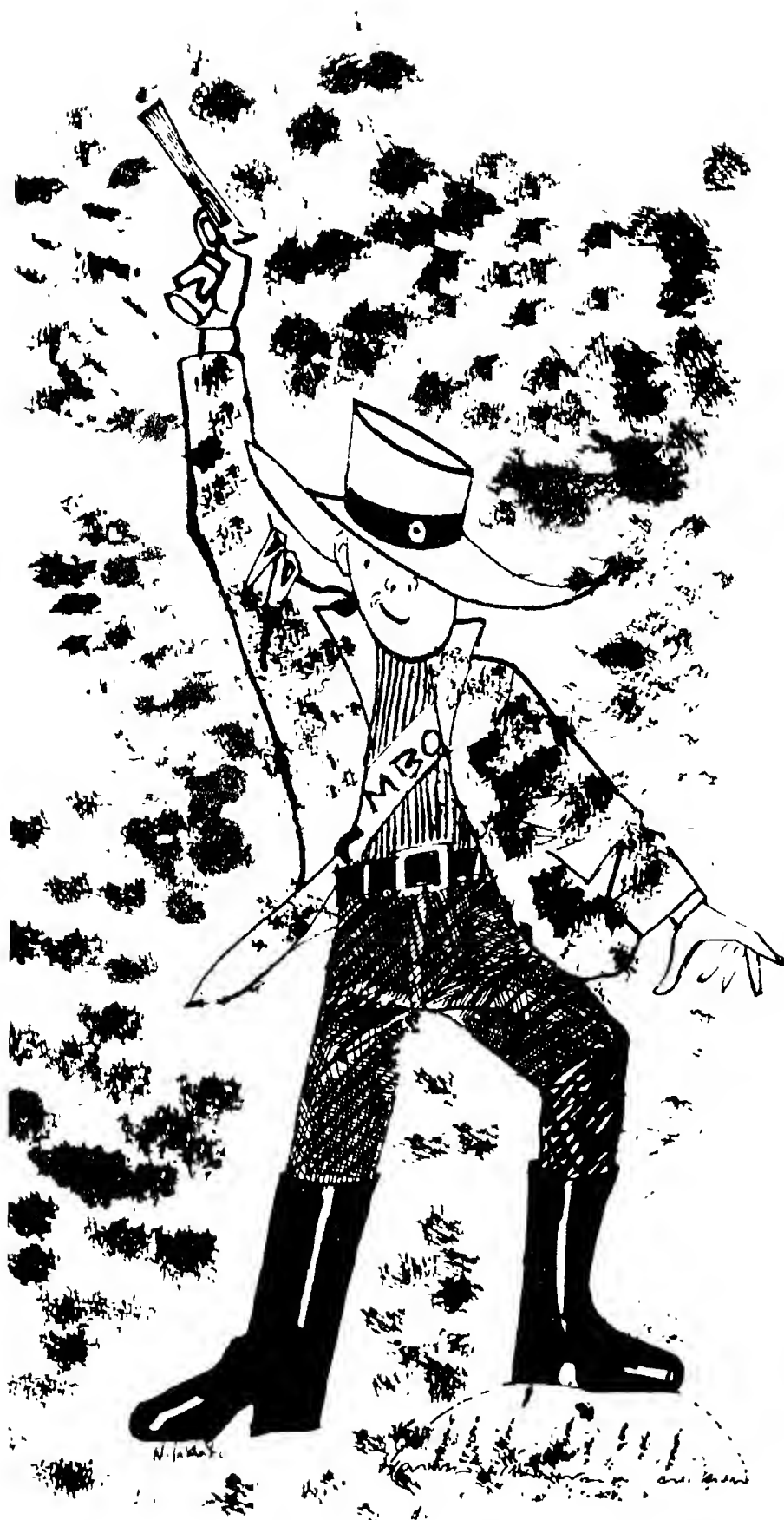
own century takes the cake in this matter. We have had two world wars—in 1914-18 and 1939-45.

Many new weapons were used in these wars. Children have toy models of all these—guns, tanks, bombers, helicopters, warships, submarines...

Wars are always being fought somewhere in the world. Peace has become a dream for mankind.

Terrorism makes it worse. Groups of men and women unleash terror in their own and other countries. They attack openly or by planting various kinds of bombs.

Some go to the extent



of hiding bombs in thermos flasks, transistor radios and dolls or other toys. They leave them in buses or busy places. When unwary grown-ups or children pick them up, the bombs explode.

Almost every day the papers carry such and other terror stories from somewhere in the world.

Children may not read the papers. But they do read or watch tales of terror. Many comics tell nothing but yarns of killing, burning and other deeds of destruction. So do many movies.

In animation films shown on TV regularly Superman, Batman and Spiderman may perform feats of daring. But in many others there is much bloodshed and violence. Many of the video games are also on war and are gory games.

Toy guns now are not what they were. They are gadgets that spit fire quickly and noisily. But they at once attract those children who read violent comics and watch violent movies. Every toy shop stocks guns. They are among the fast-selling items. Now many children take pride in exhibiting their new guns.

Boys usually play cops

and robbers or cowboy adventures with them.

Play influences children's thinking and behaviour. Some boys who play with guns develop violent habits.

This is why many people are against guns or war toys.

The opposite view is also prevalent. Some people say that wars and terrorism are realities. Whether we like them or not, we have to live with them. They believe that children should know something about guns,

bombs and such 'destructive' toys in order to escape the harm they may come to from them.

Play is not just play. It also tells of the children's leanings. Not all kids play the same games nor do they play with the same kind of toys. Often the boys who play war games or play with war toys want to be soldiers. Or they may grow up to be brave men. You may thus say that playing with guns does not make every child violent.

This is a debate. Views

can be aired both for and against war toys.

But one thing is sure. War and violence are not good. We should try our best to prevent them. Even children can do their bit. They should reject the comics that play up violence. And they should skip or see fewer gory and violent movies and animation films.

Poppuns, water guns and bubble guns are all right. They are for fun. As for the other guns, the children should think before they go for them.



FASHION CRAZE

Vedashree Khambete (15)

*Today it's a passion,
To create a new fashion,
There are such horrific styles,
They'd make you run for miles!
And high heeled shoes—my God!
They make you slip on tiles!
And facials and plucked eyebrows,
They make you look like crows.
Everybody has a craze
Getting lost in the fashion maze,
So look before you leap,
As haste makes waste!*





Story: Sukhendu Dutta

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Choudhury

THE popular Bengali novelist had little love for the theatre. But the veteran actor persuaded him to attend the premiere of a play to be staged by him. The actor was in the lead role of the play based on a much acclaimed work of the novelist.

On the scheduled day, the novelist, in his spotless dhoti and *punjabi*, arrived at the hall. He was led to his chair in the front row as a distinguished visitor.

The play earned high praise from the audience. The novelist, sitting comfortably in his seat, watched it with keen interest. When the show ended and the curtain went up, the entire cast, the eminent actor included, stood on the stage with hands folded

in *namaskar* to the novelist and the audience.

The spectators applauded thunderously and then started leaving the hall. Our novelist also rose to his feet to depart. He put on his right shoe and looked for the left shoe. He looked hard for the shoe but could not find it. It had vanished!

"Oh, I've lost one shoe!" said the novelist.

"What?" asked an employee of the theatre. "Lost? Your shoe?"

"My new shoe!" lamented the novelist. "I purchased it only last week!"

"It must be somewhere here, sir!" said the ticket-collector, voluntarily searching around. He was joined by the gate-keeper.

"Where will you find it now?" said the novelist, in utter despair. "A thief must have picked it up!"

"Picked it up?" the ticket-collector stared at him in surprise. "Who will pick up just one shoe?"

"I wonder how the man could do it!" said the embarrassed actor. "You never left your seat!"

"But my eyes and mind were fixed on the stage," replied the novelist. "And the thief took a chance. He picked it up unobserved!"

"But what will the thief do with one shoe?" asked the surprised actor. "That's amazing!"

But our novelist lived in a different world. Suddenly he picked up the right shoe and wrapped it up in a piece of newspaper.

"What are you doing?" asked the actor, astonished.

"I'll take the shoe home!" smiled the novelist. "Whoever stole

the shoe thought that I would leave the other shoe here. He plans to come back and take it. But that will never happen!"

The actor was dumbstruck. "Pity the thief!" said the novelist. And he walked barefoot out of the hall with the right shoe under his arm!

He walked along the road and smiled at the thought of the thief looking for the other shoe. How he had fooled the man!

On his way home, the novelist had to cross the *Gangar pul*, Calcutta's

Howrah bridge over the river Ganga. While walking across the bridge, a sudden thought struck him. "The thief will be disappointed that I've not left the shoe in the hall," he thought to himself. "I'm afraid he will now follow me up to my house for the shoe. I don't want that!"

He stopped and looked around him suspiciously. One of the passers-by could be the thief! Who knew?

"What a fool I am!" said he to himself. "I don't need the shoe. I can't walk

with one shoe on and one shoe off! Then why should I take it home to lure the thief?"

He approached the railing of the bridge and stole a furtive glance around. He then threw the shoe into the river and walked back home with a sigh of relief.

★

Our novelist was in for a greater surprise the next morning. He saw the veteran actor at his door early in the morning.

"What's the matter?" asked the novelist.

"I've a pleasant surprise for you," the





actor replied smiling, showing him a packet in his hand.

"What's that?" asked the novelist. "Bhim Nag's *sandesh*?"

"Oh no, no!" the actor's eyes sparkled. "A more pleasant surprise!"

Slowly he unwrapped the packet in front of the novelist and, lo and behold! it was the left shoe that had been lost the previous day!

The author's eyebrows shot up in disbelief. "Where did you get it?" he found his voice at last.

"Under your seat!" the actor looked triumphantly at him.

"How we searched for

it!" said the novelist.

"It was pushed down out of sight behind the chair," said the actor.

"The clever cleaner discovered it while sweeping the hall!"

"*Hai, Hai!*" exclaimed the novelist, striking his forehead with the open palm of his hand.

The surprised actor looked at the author, questioning him with his eyes.

"Alas!" the novelist shook his head. "What's the use of the shoe now?" He looked miserable. "I've already thrown the other shoe into the river!"

"Thrown it into the river?" the actor was

stunned. "But why?" he asked.

"I did not want the thief to follow me up to my house for the shoe!"

The actor's eyes became rounder. He did not know whether to laugh or cry!

The two looked at each other. And then the actor burst into laughter. The more he thought about the whole thing, the more he laughed!

And our novelist, sitting beside him, too laughed sheepishly.

★

This is an anecdote about the famous Bengali novelist, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya. He was the greatest and the most popular Bengali writer of his time. Even today, some sixty years after his death, he is revered to the point of worship by his innumerable readers. His novels and short stories touch the heart, and appeal to the mind of his readers. His novels *Devdas*, *Srikanta*, *Palli Samaj*, *Grihadaha*, *Charitraheen*, *Dutta* and many others have been translated into many of the languages of India.

His birth anniversary falls on September 15. And this is our tribute to the great literary figure!

Go Green

September 28 is Green Consumer Day in some countries. As consumers we need to become more aware of what goes on behind and what goes into the products we use daily, and to find out their impact on the environment. Take a closer look at what you buy and use.

★Reject products whose manufacturing

process is likely to damage the environment. This could include brands which come from companies known to pollute the environment, or those that involve cruel testing on animals.

★Do read the small print on packages and bottles so that you can avoid products which contain environmentally

unsafe ingredients. For instance, most detergents contain phosphates which are definitely harmful to the environment.

★Most important, and easiest to do, do not buy things you don't really need.

Being well-informed is the first step to green consumerism. September 28 is a good day to begin.

CEE-NFS

Answers to Buzz Quiz

(See page 9)

1. It helps in making the honey thicker and sweeter.
2. These larger cells are built at the edge of the comb so that they get more air.
3. The beating of the wings of the bees.
4. Bees get sticky material from buds and twigs. They make it into a liquid and use it to dispose the waste by covering it and sealing it.
5. It is a six-sided cell, half an inch long and a quarter inch wide.
6. Comma-shaped.
7. On royal jelly—a paste made in special glands in the bee's head.
8. The 'dance' of the bee indicates to its other colony members the kind of food available, source of supply, its distance and direction from the hive.
9. When the old home becomes cramped, the new bees fly out in a cluster in search of a new home. This is the swarm day.
10. A queen bee lives for 4-5 days.
11. About 10,000 varieties.
12. Jay birds, different varieties of bee-eaters and bears.
13. A German naturalist who first found out about the bee's code language.
14. About 250,000 eggs.
15. About one and a half months.

CROSSROADS 9

Olympically Yours!

S.S.

"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle.' Meaningful words by the founder of the modern Olympic Games. So get into the true Olympic spirit and test your awareness of man's attempts to become *Citius, Altius, Fortius—Faster, higher, stronger!*

CLUES

Across

3. Roman emperor who barred the ancient games in 393 A.D. (10)
6. Venue for the ancient Olympics believed to have been held around 1370 B.C. (7)
7. The basketball player from America nicknamed 'Magic' (6,7)
9. The great American hope—the boxer who won the Olympic Gold in Rome, 1960, and later threw his medal into the Ohio River in disgust (8,3)
13. The American woman athlete who won the heptathlon, crossing the 7,000 point mark to create history (6,6,6)
15. The venue where the Olympic symbol was first used (7)

16. The U.S. Olympic swimmer who broke the 400 m individual medley record in spite of suffering from asthma (3,5)
17. The first woman gymnast to score a perfect 10 on the asymmetrical bars (5,8)

Down

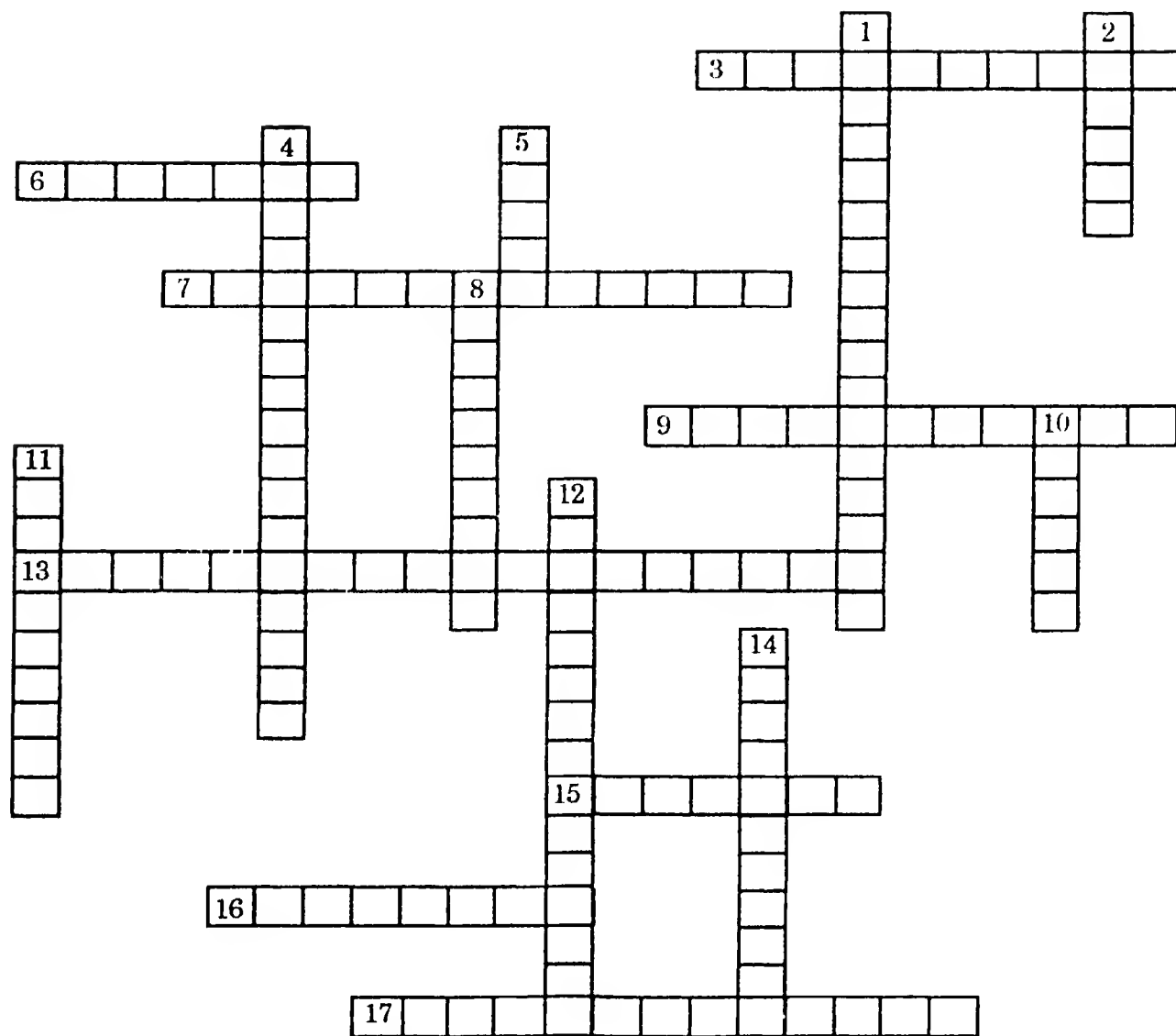
1. The gold medallist swimmer who earned greater fame acting as Tarzan for MGM films (6,11)
2. The venue where terrorists struck and massacred participants just before the beginning of the Games (6)
4. Founder of modern Olympics (6,2,9)
5. The place in Asia to first host the Games (5)

8. The star athlete of the 1936 Games who won the long jump, 100m, 200 m, 4x100m relay and whose record lasted 25 years. More importantly, his victory broke Hitler's claim of Aryan supremacy (5,5)
10. The venue of the first Olympic Games in 1896 (6)
11. The Canadian sprinter who was found using drugs in the 1988 Seoul Olympics (3,7)
12. The most successful Olympic athlete till today—the Soviet gymnast who won a total of 9 gold, 5 silver and 4 bronze in her sporting career (7,8)
14. King of pole vault (6,5)

Rush in the completed crossword! Last date for receiving entries: September 25, 1996. The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year gift subscription to *Children's World*. Answers and results in the November 1996 issue. No all-correct entries to *Bookishly Yours!* July 1996 crossword.

CROSSROADS 9

Olympically Yours!



By Reader of the Month: Geeta Menon

Five-year-old Heidi is being taken by her aunt to be dumped at her grandfather's. The villagers are very apprehensive. Uncle Alm (Heidi's grandfather) lives on Alm mountain away from the people. Everybody thinks that Heidi's aunt is out of her mind, 'How can a small girl be left with a man who leads a solitary life, who has always seemed to hate his fellow human beings... and who led a godless life...?'

This is how the book, *Heidi*, by Johanna Spyri begins. Divided into two parts, 'Heidi's years of learning and travel' and 'Heidi makes use of what she has learned', the book is a reflection of the author's childhood. Johanna Spyri was the happiest of her siblings—'lively, clever, honest and

sincere, she liked to be always outdoors.' Little wonder then that her Heidi is very much like her.

At the Grandfather's Heidi is very comfortable. The Grandfather becomes very fond of his only grandchild who is full of zest and imagination. Every morning Heidi accompanies Peter, a village boy, and his goats to the pasture. But not till she cleans and washes herself because her grandfather tells her, 'The sun will laugh at you when it is shining so brightly up there and sees that you are dirty...'

Heidi makes 'personal acquaintance' with each and every goat, 'talking and playing' as if they were her children. And when the sun sets, Heidi's happiness knows no bounds, '...it's on fire! It's on fire. All the mountains

are burning and the big snowfield over there is on fire, and the sky! Oh, see! The high cliff is all burning! Oh, the beautiful fiery snow! Peter, get up!... Look at the rocks! See the fir trees! Everything, everything is on fire!' When she tells Grandfather about what she has seen, he explains to her, 'The sun does it. When he says goodnight to the mountains, he sends them his most beautiful rays so that they may not forget him until he comes back again in the morning.'

Heidi has never been so happy in her life. 'When the evening came, she could hear the sound of the swaying branches not only in her ears but in her heart and she was so happy... as if she had found the greatest

pleasure unimaginable.'

Heidi loves to spend every waking minute looking at the fir trees and the Alm mountain. So she creeps into the loft on a 'fresh and fragrant heap of hay, and through a round window one could look down into the valley below.'

If there is one thing that upsets Heidi it is that Peter's grandmother cannot see and that no amount of light can make her see. Heidi is so sad that her grandmother has only her dreams of the concerned and loving Grandmother, but when she is taken to Frankfurt to be a companion to an invalid, all these dreams stack away in the white rolls that she gets for breakfast so that she can give them to her Grandmother when she sees her.

Life at Frankfurt makes Heidi very unhappy. She becomes homesick. None of the comforts can match the carefree life that she had led in Alm. 'Heidi scarcely knew whether it was summer or winter, for the walls and windows... always looked the same...' So much so, she has to actually climb a church tower to take a look at the distant mountains!

Despite her unhappiness Heidi learns to read. She learns table manners and also how to behave in front of people. Klara's grandmother teaches her to pray, 'When we have a sorrow we cannot speak to anybody about, then we tell the dear God in heaven, and ask Him to help us, for He can take away every sorrow that troubles us.'

(Grandparents in this book are adorable as they love and understand children. It speaks volumes to the author's affection for her grandmother.) Heidi's greatest fear is that Peter's grandmother may die before she returns to the mountains.

God does listen to her prayers and Heidi is sent home. The first person she meets is Peter's grandmother. 'Heidi then told the grandmother how she had suffered, fearing that the grandmother might die while she was away and not have the white rolls, and that Heidi would never, never be able to go to her.'

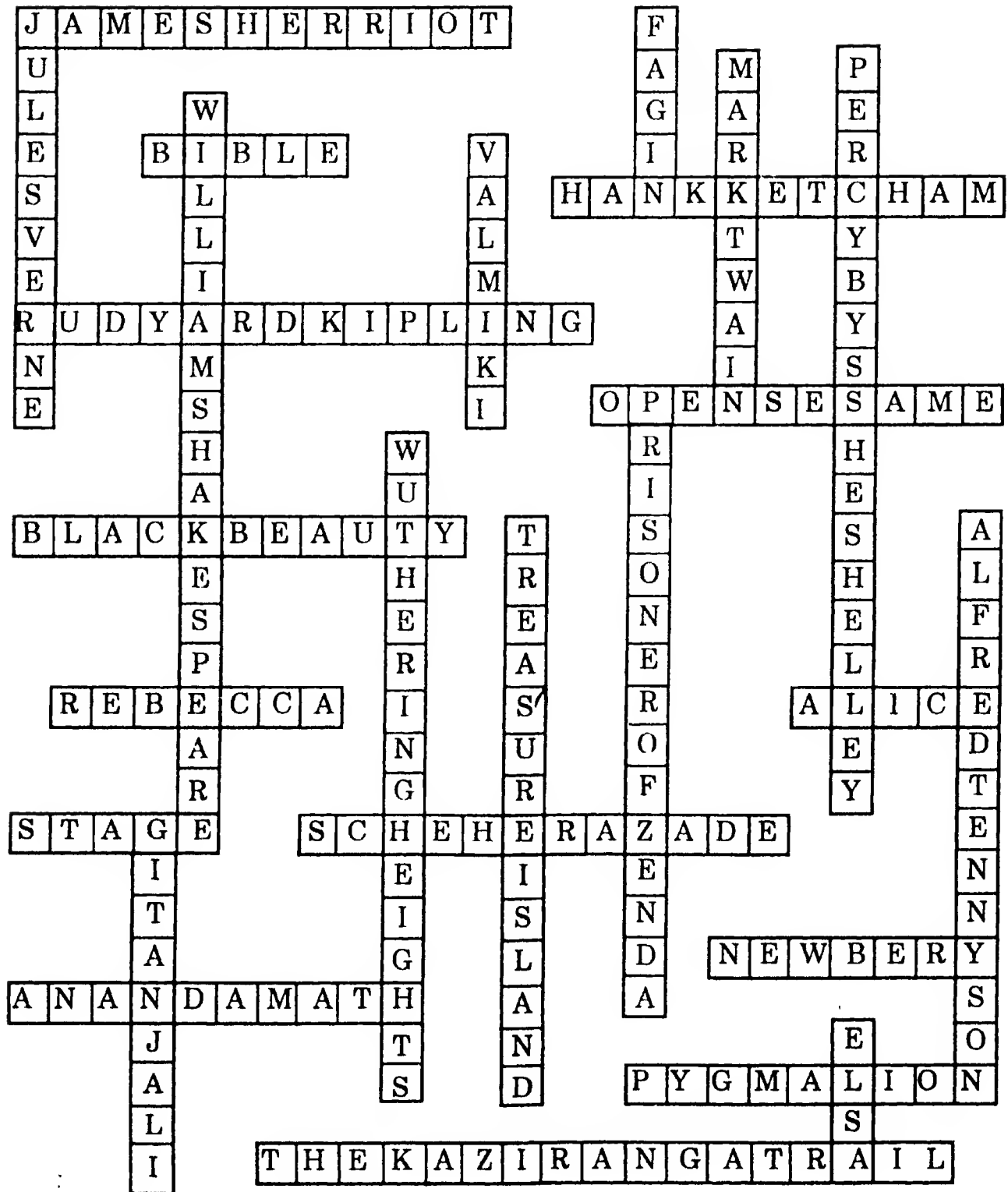
Heidi is so happy to be back that she 'had to stand still and look round, for the high mountains were behind her as she climbed... The grass all

around on the Alm was golden... While Heidi stood in the midst of all this glory, bright tears of joy and rapture ran down her cheeks, and she had to fold her hands, and looking up to heaven, thank the dear Lord aloud that He had brought her back home again, and that everything, everything was still so beautiful... and that it all was hers once again.'

Heidi's homecoming is indeed symbolic. It marks the homecoming of the Grandfather too. He is no more the lonely man who is forever cross with people. All differences are forgotten. Heidi succeeds in reforming her grandfather. The man who was an atheist and vowed never to enter the place of God, is seen in the church after many many years. Moreover he decides to live in the village with other people. 'I feel happy because I am on good terms with people and at peace with God and man. That does one good! The dear Lord was good to me when he sent you up on the Alm.' Grandfather makes his peace with God and the world, and Heidi finds peace in her mountain-home.

Answers to CROSSROADS 7

Bookishly Yours!



Olympian Feats at the Atlanta Games

Three Cheers to Leander Paes

Text: Thangamani

LEANDER Paes carried the Indian tricolour with justifiable pride at the closing ceremony. And why not? He did bring India to the medal table with his lion-hearted effort, when he defeated the Brazilian Fernando Meligeni, 3-6, 6-2, 6-4, to win the bronze medal. When he wore the Indian colours on the winners' stand, he made every Indian in the world proud of his gallant effort and there were not a few moist eyes.

It is after 44 years that an Indian has won a medal in an individual event at the Olympics and 16 long years since India won any medal. It was a wrestler Kashaba Jadhav who had won a

bronze in the bantamweight class at the Helsinki Games in 1952. The last medal won by India was the hockey gold at Moscow in 1980. To put it differently, India has only won two bronze medals at the Olympics in the entire 20th century!

A dream and a desire were all he needed—the sight of his father's Olympic hockey bronze in the 1972 Games made him long for one of his own. He might have won a silver or even the gold had he been a little luckier. Having met and vanquished players ranked much higher than him in the earlier rounds, Paes had the misfortune of meeting Andre Agassi in the semi-final, whom he had never played

before. He played an uncharacteristic game with a rash of drop shots, which, perhaps, was instrumental in his losing the match. One would like to fantasise a little—had he played Sergei Bruguera, whom he had defeated some months ago in a Davis Cup match, perhaps the Indian anthem would have played after a gap of 16 years at the Olympic stadium...

But, more than the medal that he has won, it is the message that he has sent to the 900-odd million of his countrymen back home that it is not difficult to win, if you have the will and the application needed to do it. And to think that he didn't even have a direct

entry in the draw. But he didn't squander the opportunity he got through a wildcard. The never-say-die Paes, who doesn't give up trying till the last volley has been played, didn't let his opponents' higher ranking cow him down, while moving relentlessly towards his dream.

This is not the first time that Paes has risen to the occasion. Like Vijay Amritraj before him, Paes becomes a completely charged player when playing for the country. His impeccable and often incredible record in the Davis Cup, is proof of this fact. All one can say is "Play on, Paes!"

Dismal Show by the Other Indians

India has come back empty-handed in every other sport save tennis. Our athletes were eliminated in the qualifying heats and the women's relay team was disqualified for lane infringement. Even the much touted shooting ability of the Delhi boy Jaspal Rana came to nought and our hockey showing was the pits. They couldn't even finish sixth, a position needed

by them to automatically qualify for the Sydney Games. Now they will have to go through the grind of the qualifying rounds.

But the ultimate humiliation came in wrestling, when India's lone entry Pappu Yadav was found 3.2 kgs overweight for the 48 kg category he had entered in! Ultimately, when he was accommodated in the 52 kg category, he lost in the very first round. And to think that there had been a big *tamasha* before he was selected to go to Atlanta, since there had been another contender for the spot.

So now we have the lone bronze earned by Paes, under which the entire Indian contingent huddled while returning home. Bravo, Leander!

OLYMPIC SIDELIGHTS Broken Bones and Team Spirit

In the three-day events in the equestrian section, two Australian women participated with broken bones—Wendy Schaeffer, riding with a broken leg held together with pressure pads and screws

and her team-mate Gillian Rolton, who rode with a collar-bone and two ribs broken - won their country the team gold medal.

Another young participant, Kerri Strug of the USA, who went through her gymnastic routines with a sprained ankle, also helped her team win the gold medal. Now, isn't that what you would call team spirit?

Olympian Participation

In the first *modern Olympics in 1896*, about 285 male athletes representing *13 nations* took part. A hundred years later, about *10,800* sportspersons from *197 countries* participated in the various disciplines. Incidentally this is the first Olympics when all the 197 members of the International Olympic Committee took part in the Games.

The smallest of the participating countries was Nauru, a South Pacific island. Its entire population—8000—is less than the total number of athletes taking part in the Games!

Mascot Mania

Mascots are very much part of any sports event today. The tradition of having a mascot for Olympics started during the 1968 Winter Olympics at Grenoble, France, when Schuss, a skiing beast, was made the mascot. The Atlanta Olympics was the first to have a computer generated mascot. When it was unveiled in Barcelona in 1992, it was actually called 'Whatizit', since it resembled nothing on earth. However, the name was subsequently changed to 'Izzy', though the mascot was retained. It is blue, wears red sneakers and has lightning bolts for its eyes and wears the Olympics rings on its head and tail. Going by the popularity of Izzy products, it seems to have made its mark, just like the previous ones—the lovable bear Misha at the Moscow Olympics, the eagle Sam at Los Angeles, the tiger Hodori at Seoul and the dog Cobi at Barcelona.

Gargantuan Appetites

An estimated million meals were downed by the athletes and officials over the duration of the

Olympics. More than 550 recipes were prepared and served, which included tandoori delights for the Indians and special Kimchee, the national favourite of South Koreans. All these were prepared in a kitchen the size of a large cathedral. Indeed Olympic catering has come a long way since the days of the ancient Greek who served figs, dates, nuts, barley and honey to their athletes.

Environment-Friendly Games

Except for designated zones, the rest of the entire Olympic area at Atlanta was a smoke-free zone. The company that sponsored the US team exhorted the spectators to use the duration of the Games to give up smoking for good. It also advised them to avoid alcohol and drink water instead as a healthy substitute to combat dehydration. Vehicles were not allowed inside the Olympic area either. The compulsory walking that the spectators had to do was touted as a good exercise to boost blood circulation and combat stress!

Wah! Wah! Ustad!

Whether or not the Indians made any impact at Atlanta, the *tabla* maestro, Ustad Zakir Hussain did leave his mark. He was involved in the composing of the Olympic theme music titled 'Summon the Heroes', along with John William of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. One has to take heart from the fact that at least one Indian rose to the occasion.

He was the Greatest

One of the most memorable sights of the Olympics was the lighting of the Olympic flame by Muhammad Ali. His body ravaged by Parkinson's disease, the great heavyweight boxer, still held the torch steady in his right hand, even while his left hand and face shook uncontrollably. A visibly moved US President Bill Clinton punched the air with his fist at the end of the Olympian feat by THE GREATEST ALI.

The Largest Cover-up

The field cover for the opening ceremony measured 22,500 square

metres of nylon mesh fabric which was specially made in Lyon, France. It was in 2200 pieces and was joined together by Velcro strips. It took more than 30,000 hours to assemble the cover. The cover was hand-painted by six Atlanta artists and painters who used up 2,600 litres of paint to do it! The colourful costumes worn during the ceremony were made up of 56,000 hours of labour and used up 55,800 metres of fabric and 1.6 million sequins.

OLYMPIC FACTS

Oldest Organised Games

Olympic games have been there longer than you think. Athletics were a part of religious festivals of the ancient Greeks. Such festivals probably began before **1400 B.C.** Over a period of time, four such festivals were celebrated. They were, the ***Isthmian, Nemean, Olympic and Pythian*** games. Of these the most important was the Olympic festival which was celebrated to honour Zeus, the king of Greek gods. The ***first recorded Olympics*** however was

held in **776 B.C.** in ***Olympia***. The stadium could accommodate 40,000 spectators. How's that for size?

The Olympic Games were ordered closed by Emperor Theodosius in 394 A.D. An earthquake in the 500's buried the magnificent stadium. And it wasn't till 1875 that some German archaeologists discovered the ruins. This gave the French educator Baron Pierre de Coubertin the idea of reviving the Games. In 1894, he presented his idea to an international body of amateur sportspersons and the International Olympic Committee was floated thereafter. The first modern Games took place in 1896, after a gap of 1500 years. And since then, barring the war-ravaged years of 1916, 1940 and 1944, the Games have been held without a break.

Single Event Olympics

For the first 13 Olympiads, the only event held was the 180 metres footrace. By 708 B.C., wrestling and pentathlon, which consisted of discus throw, javelin throw, a

sprint, wrestling and long jump, were added to the Games. Boxing became a part of the Olympics in 688 B.C. and the four-horse chariot race was added in 680 B.C.

Today there are 271 events spread across 26 sports. The total number of medals is 1838 of which 604 are gold. More events are to be added for the Sydney Olympics in the year 2000. Incidentally, the city that wins the bid to host the Olympics also has a choice in the addition of new events to the Games.

Olympic Flame

It was only in 1928 that the Olympic flame as we know it, was ceremonially lit. The modern version of the flame was adopted in 1936 at the Berlin Games. It symbolises the continuity between the ancient and modern Games. The torch used to kindle the flame is first lit by the sun's rays at the site of the ancient Greek Olympics and then carried to the Olympic venue by relay runners. Of course, when the flame has to cross the oceans, ships and planes are used to transport it.

A Time to Laugh

Ajay: I think grandma needs new glasses.

Mother: Why?

Ajay: She's been watching two pairs of trousers going round in the washing machine and thinks she's watching a wrestling match on TV.

Lata: What kind of a dog is that?

Mani: A police dog.

Lata: He doesn't look like one.

Mani: That's because he's in the secret service.

Lady passenger: Captain, do ships this size sink very often?

Captain: No, never more than once, madam



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Illustrations: Shalini Agarwal

A CEE-NFS Feature
Text: Kosha Shah

DID YOU know that if you are suffering from chronic anaemia,

nervousness, sleeplessness, loss of appetite and weight, generally neglected as common ailments, it could be due to the increased percentage of lead in the

air. While we all breathe about 12,500 quarts of air per day, we are least aware that inhalation becomes an important route by which toxic substances in the air

enter our body.

Air can get polluted in a variety of ways. But what is now causing concern is the increased percentage of lead in the atmosphere. According to the 'Air Quality Status Report 1994', lead concentrates ranged from 0.006 to 2.19 micrograms per cubic metre in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Kanpur, Kochi, Hyderabad, Madras and Nagpur. The highest concentration of lead (2.19 microgram per cubic metre) was observed in Bombay during the winter season. Some areas of Delhi have experienced lead concentration of 8 micrograms per cubic metre against the preferred limit of 1 microgram per cubic metre during peak traffic hours.

Repeated exposure to air contaminated with lead fumes causes lead poisoning. Though systematic studies of the effect of lead pollution are not accessible, inferences can be drawn from the studies conducted on workers employed by lead-based industries. The initial symptoms of lead poisoning are so vague and non-specific

that the problem escapes diagnosis. In adults, it may cause abdominal pain, muscle weakness, subtle intellectual deterioration, memory defects and alterations in perceptual and cognitive functions. The affected persons may not respond to common drugs. Other toxic effects of lead can adversely affect spermatogenesis and foetal development, increase hypertension and cause chronic kidney diseases and neurological handicaps. The initial effects on children include increased irritability and lack of concentration. If not treated at this stage, it may lead to fits, delirium, unconsciousness and even death. To make things worse, the treatment of lead poisoning is very expensive as drugs are not easily available in our country.

The menace of lead pollution is attributed to two main sources—increased emissions of automobile exhaust and rise in the number of lead-based industries. The magnitude of vehicles in the four metros is largely responsible for the deterioration in air quality. According to one

estimate, Delhi has 22 lakh vehicles against 6.51 lakh vehicles in Bombay, 6.25 lakh vehicles in Calcutta and 4.77 lakh vehicles in Madras. Lead is normally added to petrol to increase fuel-efficiency. There has been a phenomenal rise in lead trades like storage battery manufacture and repair, lead-scrap smelting, printing presses, radiator repair, demolition and renovation of old houses, and lead painted metal structures.

It would be impractical to think that there could be any cuts in either the number of automobiles or lead-based industries. But it would be positively dangerous to let the menace get worse. The Government is to enforce the Supreme Court directive to fit catalytic convertors in all newly registered four-wheelers in the four metros from April 1, 1995. The catalytic convertor converts poisonous gases into carbon dioxide (CO₂) and water vapour, thereby reducing the harmful effect of automobile exhaust. But these convertors are worthwhile only if unleaded petrol is used in

vehicles. So, unleaded petrol has been made available at 154 retail outlets in four metros and 15 radial routes.

Refineries may need to invest about Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000 crore to increase the production of unleaded petrol over the next three years.

It is a matter of concern that what is dispensed as 'unleaded' petrol in India has the maximum amount of lead (0.15 gm/l) permissible by international standards. The supply of unleaded petrol would account for 7% to 8% of the total supply of petrol in our country. While concentration of cars is a feature of metro cities, it must be remembered that 80% of petrol is consumed by two-and three-wheelers, which are the worst pollutants. The manufacturers of these vehicles will need to upgrade their engines to suit the use of unleaded petrol. But old cars cannot use this eco-friendly fuel because they do not have catalytic convertors. Even if one wished to fit one, the cost is prohibitive—for example, a Maruti car would need to change 35 parts to accommodate a

catalytic convertor. The poor response from the four metros clearly indicates that there are several difficulties that inhibit the conversion process. Car owners with catalytic convertors have no motivation to use unleaded petrol because it is priced the same as leaded petrol. Besides, they have to travel more as the supply of unleaded petrol is available only at select outlets. On the other hand, if cars without catalytic convertors use unleaded petrol, it results in the emission of unburnt benzene which is known to cause cancer of the bone marrow. Retailers find that unleaded petrol means slow moving sale and evaporation of stock. Hence they are forced to sell unleaded petrol to cars without catalytic convertors. Another major inconvenience is that there is no provision for the supply of "unleaded" petrol to vehicular traffic between cities. However, it is envisaged that petrol with low lead content of 0.15 gm/l would be introduced all over the country by December 1996.

It has been suggested that the price of unleaded

petrol be reduced and/or catalytic convertors supplied at subsidised rates in order to hasten the process of conversion. Meanwhile it appears that the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute had designed a catalytic convertor which could be fitted in old cars and other vehicles and be as effective in removing pollutants, at a lesser cost, than the catalytic convertors that are being imported for new cars.

As long as petroleum, leaded or unleaded, remains the primary fuel, it is difficult for transport to become environment-friendly. Reduction in traffic being improbable, it is time that sustainable mass transport systems based on non-fossil fuels are developed. While efforts should continue to reduce emission of toxic exhaust, substitution of petrol with steam, electric or solar power or Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) would also help. There is evidence that *Nerium* and *Babool* trees absorb lead from air. Planting of these trees along roadsides would go a long way in controlling lead pollution.

PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the *Children's World* Pen-friends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have pen-friends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

8258
Sunanda Khargharia (14)
Class IX, Roll No. 926
Don Bosco High School
Baghchung,
Jorhat 785001
Assam, India
Watching TV, music
Australia, U.S.A.

8259
Mahua Adak (16)
A-21, Type IV
Laxmi Bai Nagar
New Delhi 110023, India
Reading, computers
Any country

8260
Prachi Saxena (12)
69-B, Pocket A-3

Mayur Vihar, Phase III
Delhi 110096, India
Reading, enjoying life
U.S.A., Saudi Arabia

8261
Mamta Thapa (15)
c/o S. Thapa
Embassy of India
P.B. 193, Thimpu, Bhutan
Music, reading
Any country

8262
Roma Gurung (15)
c/o Tej Bahadur
P.B. 193, Embassy of
India
Thimpu, Bhutan
Singing, making friends
Any country

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB ENROLMENT FORM	
Member No.
Name: Mr. / Mrs.
Address:	
.....	
Hobbies:	
Pen-friends wanted in (Country):	
*Age limit 16 years	Signature

GIRLS

8263
Sriparna Nayak (12)
Q.No. H6-86, South Park
O.C. Road, Bistupur
Jamshedpur 831001
Bihar, India
Reading, painting
India, Japan

8264
Rachna Raman (14)
E-55, South Moti Bagh
Nanakpura, Near Post
Office
New Delhi 110021, India
Listening to music, pen-
friendship
Any country

8265
Divya Sachdeva (14)
26/20 Kishan Ganj Rly
Flats
Delhi 110007, India
Making friends, dancing
Switzerland, Singapore

8266
Laxmi Tamang (16)
Class VIII
Sarpang Jr. High School
Sarpang, Bhutan
Seeing movies, reading
comics
Any country

8267
Kanchan (14)
Dehradun Hill's Academy
Doodhli Road, Doiwala
Dehradun, U.P., India
Music, pen-friendship
Any country

8268
Vrinda Maheshwari (9)
T-5, Green Park (Main)
New Delhi 110016, India
Stamp collecting, music
United Kingdom, Spain

8269
Asmita Deswal (11)
BH-35 (East), 1st Floor
Shalimar Bagh
Delhi 110052, India
Skating, singing
Any country

8270
Aboli Deshpande (14)
'Shimpla', 13 Sumarga
Society
128/2, Kothrud
Pune 411029
Maharashtra, India
Stamp, coin collecting
Germany, France

8271
Preetha A. Meda (8)
c/o Mr. M.S. Ashok Kumar
15/12, IInd Floor
Old Rajendra Nagar
New Delhi 110060, India
Chess, athletics
Australia, France

8272
B. Deepa (14)
Qtr. No. 2184
Lodi Road Complex
New Delhi 110003,
India
Reading, music
Any country

8273
Megha Wahal (13)
24-E Pocket III
Mayur Vihar Phase I
Delhi 110091, India
Singing, cooking
Any country

8274
Manisha Rathor (13)
Qtr. No.-10D, Street 28
Sector 8, Bhilai Nagar
Dist. Durg 490006, India
Drawing, dancing
Singapore, Canada

8275
Meena Dolma Tamang
(16)
VIII B, Sarpang Jr. High
School
Sarpang, Bhutan
Skating, listening to
music
Any country

8276
Surekha Aggarwal (11)
185 DN College Road
Shivajee Gali
Hissar 125001
Haryana, India
Dancing, reading
Any country

8277
Onam Tamut
P/o Kharsang
Dist. Changlang
V.K.V. School
Kharsang
Gardening, reading
Any country

BOYS

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>8278
Harish Jalihal (15)
c/o G.R. Jalihal
IInd Cross
Gadag 582101,
Dharwad Dist.
Karnataka, India
Reading, travelling
Any country</p> <p>8279
Jotika Mungyak (11)
V.K.V. Roing P.O.
Dibang Valley Dist.
Arunachal Pradesh
792110 India
Reading, letter
writing
Any country</p> <p>8280
Abhijit Chakraborty (12)
c/o Ashoke Chakraborty
P.O. Garolgacha
Vill. Garalgacha
Dist. Hooghly
West Bengal, India
Cricket, reading
Any country</p> <p>8281
Amitabh Shah (14)
c/o Shri Anil Kumar Shah
V.P.O. Ghurkari
Kangra 176001
Himachal Pradesh, India
Stamps & coins, playing
Any country</p> <p>8282
Subrat Sahani (14)
c/o S. Sahani
Qr. No. J/90 HAL
Township
P.O. Sunabeda 763002
Dist. Koraput, Orissa,</p> | <p>India
Cricket, pen-friendship
Any country</p> <p>8283
Govinda Bhandari (16)
Ugyen Dorji High School
P/o Haa, Bhutan
Collecting quotations and
proverbs
Any country</p> <p>8284
Pranav Arvind (10)
2699 Dr. Mukherjee Nagar
Near Batra Cinema
Delhi 110009, India
Reading
U.S.A., U.K.</p> <p>8285
Dinesh Kumar (14)
76 J.K. Khan Road
Royapettah
Madras 600014
Tamil Nadu, India
Reading, cricket
India, U.S.A.</p> <p>8286
Anirban Chowdhury (12)
P.O. Vivekananda Nagar
Shivananda Sadan
R.K.M. Vidyapeeth
Purulia 723147, West Bengal
Gardening, ceramics
India</p> <p>8287
Arijit Bose (11)
c/o B.B. Bose
State Bank of India
Bhandaridah P.O.
Dist. Bokaro 829132
Bihar, India
Stamp collecting
Australia, Italy</p> | <p>8288
Raghav Narang (12)
76, Pocket D, Mayur Vihar II
Delhi 110091, India
Cricket, dramatics
U.K., India</p> <p>8289
Siddharth Sharma (14)
CII/173, Lodhi Road
New Delhi 110003, India
Reading, horse riding
England</p> <p>8290
Tanuj Khanna (10)
K-43, Old Double Storey
Lajpat Nagar - IV
New Delhi 110024
Reading, cricket
India</p> <p>8291
Vineet Rajan (12)
F-3/C, D.D.A. Flats
Munirka, New Delhi 110067
India
Environmental issues,
swimming
Any country</p> <p>8292
Suhail Alam (13)
L-2/72-B, D.D.A. Flats
Kalkaji, New Delhi 110019
India
Cycling, making friends
Any country</p> <p>8293
N. Deepak (14)
Standard X B
Poorna Prajna Hostel
Sangameshwerpet
Chickmuglur Dist.
Karnataka 577136, India</p> |
|--|--|--|

BOYS

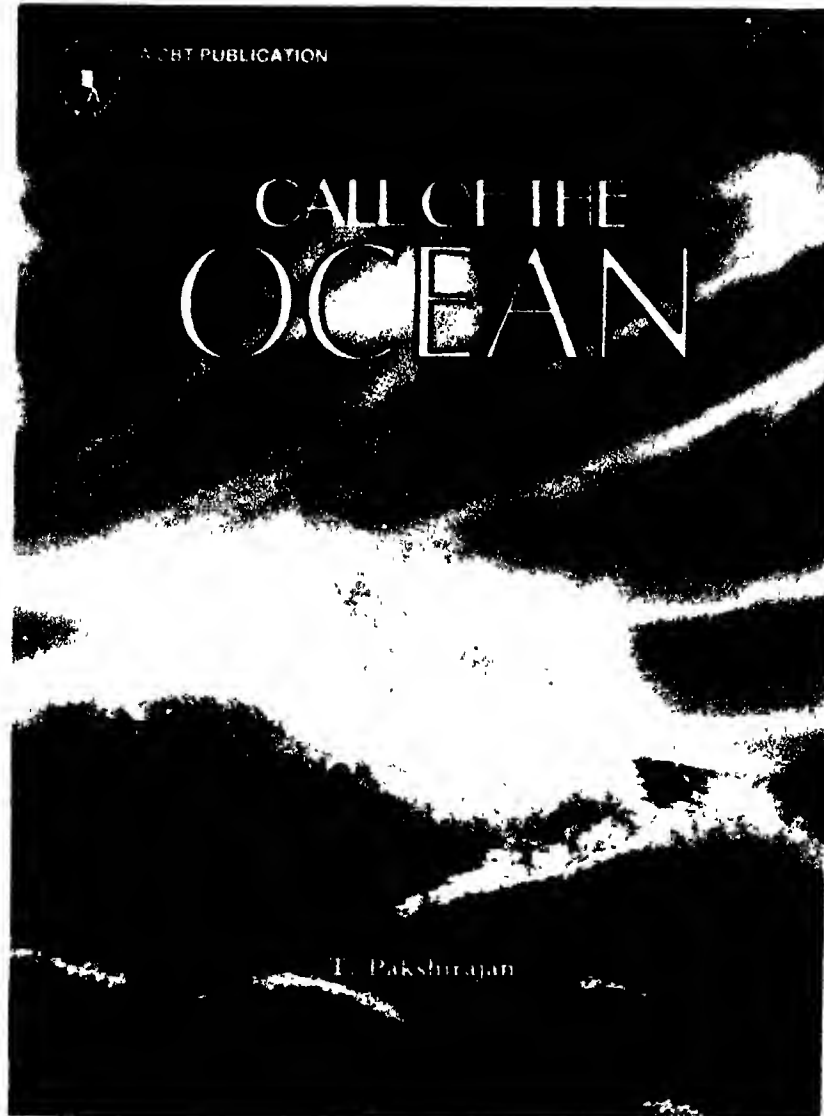
Collecting foreign coins U.S.A., Japan 8294 Kwoka Adak (15) c/o Mr. S.K. Adak Room No. 231 A MGO/PPO, Army H.Q. South Block New Delhi 110011, India Computers, pen-friendship Any country	Rajasthan, India Drawing, reading Any country 8299 Annubhav Gupta (10) c/o Mr. Y.K. Gupta High Commission of India Lagos, Nigeria Playing video games, cricket Any country 8300 Aketo Linggi (12) s/o Shri N. Linggi P/o Jia, Vill. Idili Dist. Dibang 792110 Arunachal Pradesh, India Pen-friends, football Any country 8301 Ruchu Tacho (13) c/o Principal (V.K.V.) Roing Dibang Valley 792110 Arunachal Pradesh Reading, coin collection Any country 8302 Sumesh K. Das (16) XI A Ashoka Seniors Sainik School Kazhakootam Trivandrum 695585 Kerala, Music Any country 8303 Jubith Nair (16) 2891, Tagore Seniors Sainik School Kazhakootam Trivandrum 695585	Kerala Drawing, dancing Any country 8304 Suman Pallegar (15) 23, III Temple Road, 15th Cross, Malleswaram Bangalore 560003, India Reading, stamps India 8305 Somesh Aggarwal (14) C-176 Maharana Pratap Enclave Pitampura Area New Delhi 110034, India Photography, travelling Mauritius, Japan 8306 Abhishek Aggarwal (9) C/176 M.P. Enclave Rani Bagh (Near Pitampura) New Delhi 110034 Playing cricket, football Any country 8307 Vipin Aggarwal (10) 185, D.N. College Road Shivajee Gali Hissar, Haryana 125033 Playing cricket, cycling Any country 8308 Pritham (9) P.D.A. Colony Plot No. 21 Corlim, Ilhas Goa 403110, India Collecting stamps & currency Mauritius, Papua New Guinea
8295 Darshan A. Meda (12) c/o Mr. M.S. Ashok Kumar 15/12, IInd Floor Old Rajendra Nagar New Delhi 110060, India Reading, karate Far East, South India 8296 Darshan Patel (15) Odhavjibhai, Via Songadh Al: Valukad, Tal. Palitana Gujarat 364250 Music, pen-friendship Any country 8297 Chirag Mandwai (13) Qr. No. 7/A, Street No. 15 Sector-4, Bhilai Nagar Dist. Durg, Madhya Pradesh 490001 India Match collection, swimming England, France 8298 Dubble Varshney (8) A-14 Anita Colony Bajajnagar, Jaipur 302015		

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Painting Competition 1995
CHILDREN'S WORLD AWARD



Acrobatics
by
Ankila Hiremath (13)

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CHILDREN'S WORLD

**MARINE
MEDLEY**

WORLD ANIMAL WEEK
OCTOBER 1—7



SHANKAR'S INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S COMPETITION

1997 RULES

1. The competition is open to children all over the world. They should have been born on or after January 1, 1981.

3. Competitors are free to choose the theme/subject they are interested in, or like most, for their paintings/drawings/writings.

4. Each entry should be certified by the parent/guardian/teacher as the original, unaided work of the competitor done during 1996. Entries should be an individual effort and NOT a combined work.

5. Every entry should carry the following information in English and in BLOCK LETTERS, at the back of the painting/drawing or at the end of the written work:

- * First name
- * Surname
- * Boy or Girl
- * Date of Birth
- * Nationality
- * Full postal address
- * Subject/title of the entry

6. No entry will be returned. The copyright of all entries will rest with Shankar's International Children's Competition.

7. All packets should be pre-paid/adequately stamped and mailed directly to reach:

Shankar's International Children's Competition
c/o The Editor
The Editor
Shankar's International Children's Competition
c/o The Editor
The Editor

8. Entries sent by air cargo will not be accepted.

9. The last date for receipt of entries is 31st December 1996.

10. The drawings can be any medium.

11. The size of each entry should NOT be less than 30 X 40 cm in size.

12. A competitor may submit upto 6 entries. They should NOT be mounted/framed.

13. Only entries in ENGLISH will be considered. Translations from other languages do not qualify for the competition.

14. Entries may be in the form of poems, plays, short stories, essays, descriptive writing, and the like.

15. A competitor may submit upto 6 entries. They should be in a neat handwriting or typed.

16. The entries will be judged by the organizers with the help of a jury. The judges' decision will be final.

17. The following prizes are offered:

1st Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 10,000/-
2nd Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 5,000/-
3rd Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 2,500/-
4th Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 1,000/-
5th Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 500/-
6th Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 250/-
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15th Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 0.25/-
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18th Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 0.02/-
19th Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 0.01/-
20th Prize: A certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs. 0.00/-

18. Results will be announced in July 1997. Prizewinners will be informed individually by post.

19. The best entries will be published in Shankar's Children's Art Number, Volume 48. Selected entries will also appear in the monthly magazine for children, *Children's World*.

20. All competitors are entitled to a copy of the Art Number, Volume 48, at a concessional price.

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CHILDREN'S WORLD

OCTOBER 1996
Vol. XXIX
No. 7

Wildlife in our Waters

Snippets about marine life to mark the World

Wildlife Week, October 1-7

Mamata Pandya, CEE-NFS

Octopus' Garden

These belong in the water but are a curious mix of words as we know them from the dictionary

Threatened Oceans

We may use water to cleanse ourselves but when we pollute our very sources of water, we endanger not only our-elves but also wildlife within

Meena Raghunathan, CEE-NFS

The Trouble with Mice

Poem
Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla

Toons World

Cartoons
Ajit Narayan

Animal Welfare and Rights

Book review
Bhavana Nair

My Grandfather

Poem
Anju George

Green Gold

Smallest, longest, tallest
Thangamani

A Magic Moment

Story
Saibal Chakraborty

Riki-tiki-tavi's Accomplice

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S.S.

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True life
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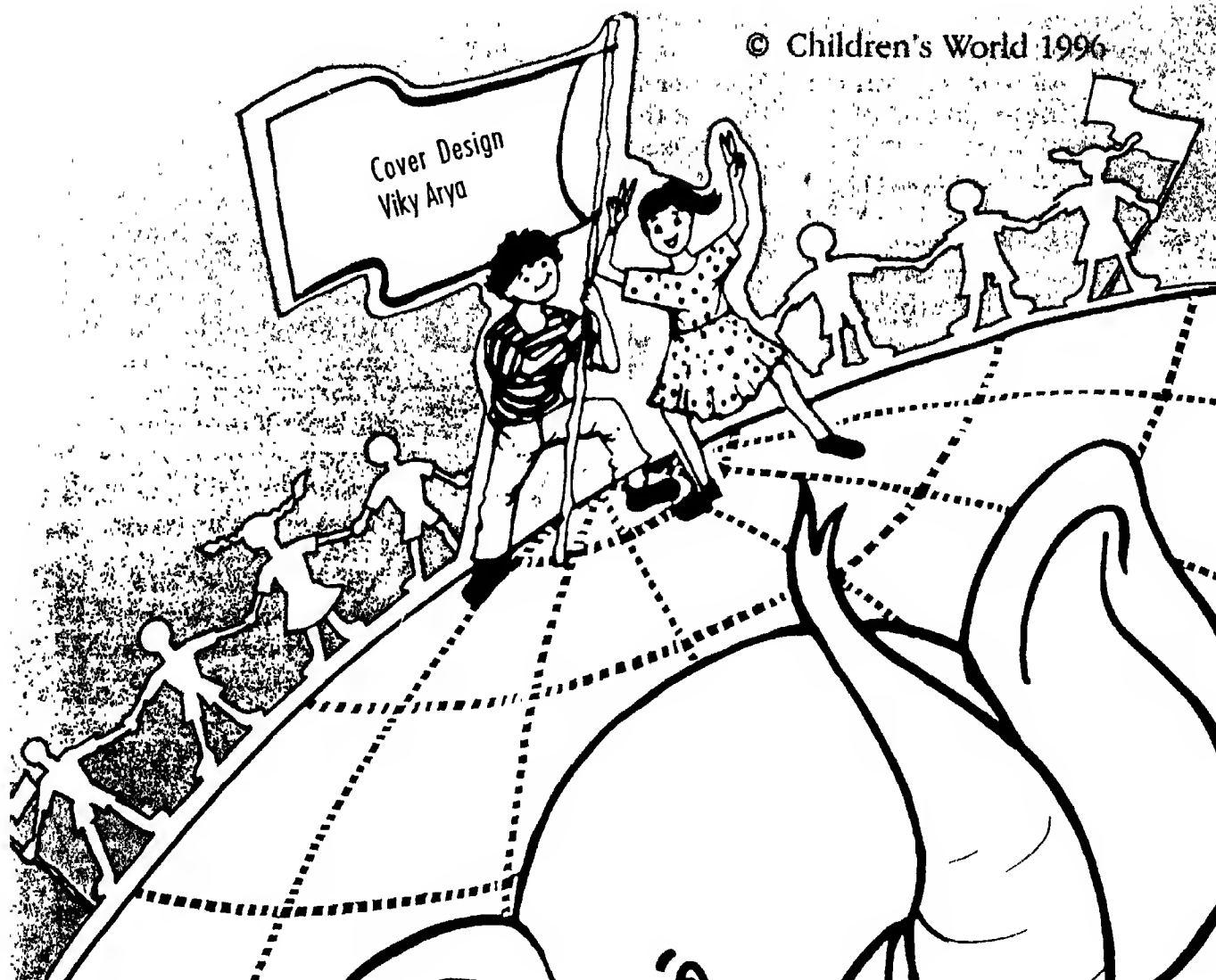
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O.P. Bhagat

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Dolls Museum India



Dear Editor...

SMALL REQUEST

I have a small request. Please do not print anything at the back of the pen-friends enrolment form. Because when we cut the form the story at the back of the form is also lost.

S. Anuradha, Madras

"EXCUSE ME, SIR"

I like *Children's World* very much. When I first

picked it up in my hands in the school library, I found the cover very interesting. I started reading it. I was free for only 40 minutes and after that I had a class. I forgot to look at the time and I did not attend three classes. When I finished reading my friends had disappeared. I hurried to my classroom to see my Biology teacher taking a class. I started by saying, "Excuse me, Sir"... He

asked why I was late? I said I was reading *Children's World*. To my surprise he started praising me. He said, "I am excusing you because you were reading a good magazine."

Children's World is really interesting. Please publish more and easy puzzles and crosswords. The stories which you publish are very interesting.

Uma Rani, Sandur,
Karnataka

Some years ago, on a visit to Madras, I had the opportunity of being by the seaside early every morning. Building sand-castles and splashing about in the water was what we restricted ourselves to, till we saw the local urchins collect a rich haul of unusual sea shells every time a wave broke. Lacking their expertise, I bent low and grabbed the only shell that came my way, the next time a wave swept over us. Pleased with the prize, I took it 'home' and left it in the bathroom. At night, a series of unusual sounds pierced our subconscious but we could not pin-point them. They had sounded like high-pitched screams that had been put on 'mute'

Night sounds in Madras, especially where we were staying, included persistent frogs croaking for rain, among a host of other insect orchestras, and we soon ignored this 'new voice'.

The morning visit to the bathroom revealed that the 'shell' (an abalone) had 'walked' to the other end! It was my first encounter with a 'walking' sea shell. More horrifying was the thought that the high-pitched screech could have been this creature's... We rushed to the sea-shore to return the abalone to its original home—but it might have been too late. A soppy poem written on the spot about the sounds of the sea drowning the voice within, somewhat took care of the remorse felt—then. But the lasting realisation was—we know so little of "God's creatures great and small". It is with a sense of relief that assuages a guilt complex somewhat, that we mark this year's World Wildlife Week with Mamata Pandya's and Meena Raghunathan's observations on *Wildlife in Our Waters*. Do our readers

...Dear Readers

have any unusual but educating experiences to share with us? Do come forward and let us hear about them. Nature has a strange way of putting right the equation...

Meanwhile, the festive season is also creeping in upon us. We are sure the nine days of *Puja* and *Dussehra* will be celebrated with the usual fervour. We are equally certain that, our *Children's World* readers will show a rare sensitivity towards others that has become the hallmark of all that is desirable in the world of children.

Here at *Children's World* there is feverish activity preceding the biggest celebration for us—the *November Your Pages Diwali Special Issue*. In the meantime...

Happy reading, celebrating and awaiting the YP issue...

Editor

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WILDLIFE IN OUR WATERS

Mamata Pandya
CEE-NFS

Wildlife—the word conjures up visions of a lone tiger prowling through thick jungle or, a thousand-strong herd of wildebeest thundering across the African savannah; polar bears on icecaps, and kangaroos in the bush.

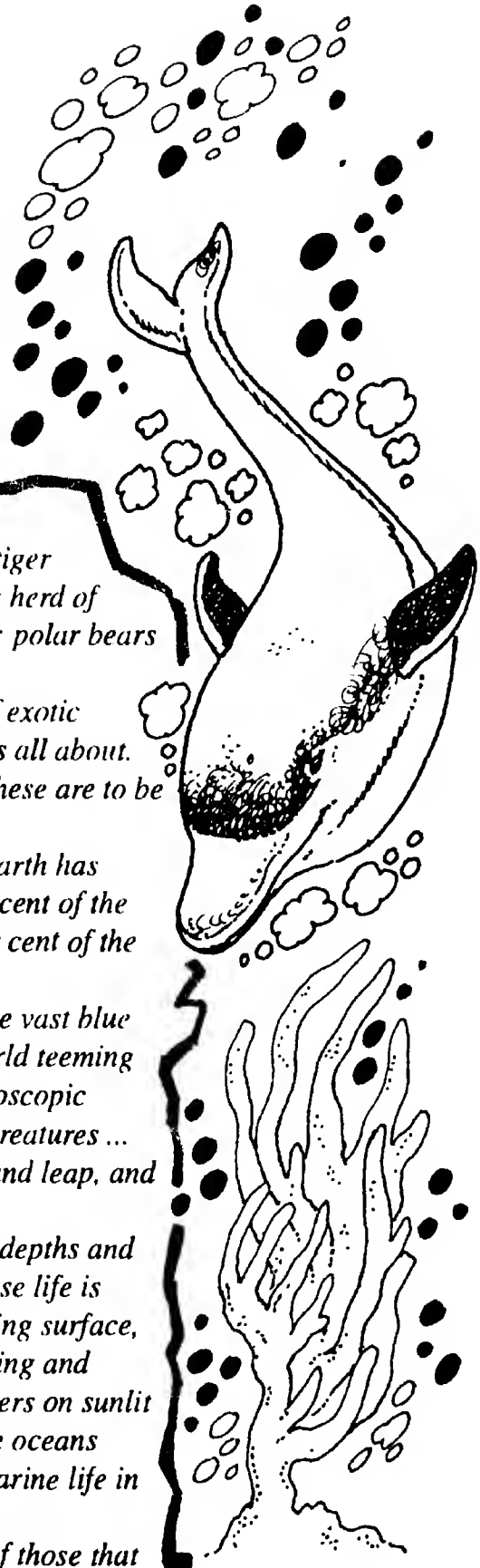
All large, striking animals inhabiting a variety of exotic locations. That's our general idea of what wildlife is all about. And if you give it any thought—you'd find that all these are to be found on land.

But have you ever stopped to consider that our Earth has more water than land? Oceans cover nearly 71 per cent of the earth's surface. So, does one assume that only 3 per cent of the earth is inhabited by creatures great and small?

Well, no one would be more mistaken. Beneath the vast blue stretches of water that make up our oceans, is a world teeming with life. From the gigantic blue whales to the microscopic organisms—the waters are home to a multitude of creatures ... creatures that swim and soar, glide and slide, dive and leap, and float and flip ... through their watery world.

Each one is specially adapted or equipped to the depths and conditions in which it lives. And so must it be because life is found everywhere in the oceans—from the shimmering surface, to the deepest and darkest depths. From the burrowing and crawling life forms on the ocean floor to the swimmers on sunlit surface waters, to the denizens of the shores—where oceans meet land—there is the most incredible variety of marine life in the oceans of the world.

Diving into waters closer home, let's meet some of those that



live in our waters—that is, in the Indian Ocean that laps the long shores of our subcontinent from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal.

MARINE MEDLEY

Silver Flash

Gliding and leaping, skimming the shimmering water's surface, these fish really seem to fly. Little wonder then, that they are called *Flying Fish*. The silvery fish cut through the water surface by using the tail as a propeller and forefins as wings. They seem to fly even though they really don't. These fish can be seen gliding in the waters along our East and West coasts, and are also found in the deep waters off the south-west coast.

Gentle Giant

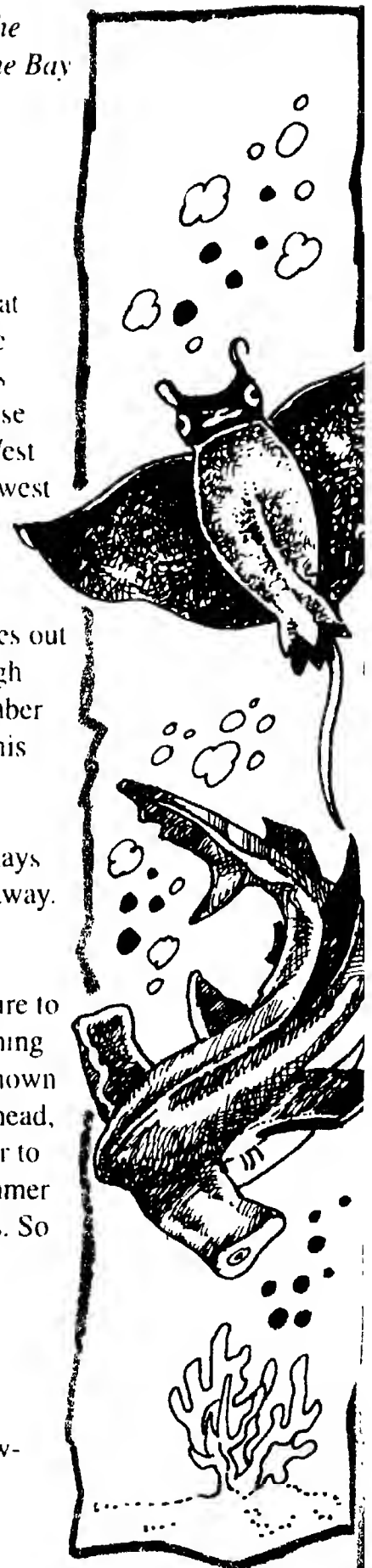
Here's another leaper. This one can manage to leap metres out of the water—and that's quite a feat considering it can weigh over a tonne and a half! Meet the *Manta Ray*—a huge member of the shark and ray family. Also known as the Devilfish, this one does not live up to its name. It is quite gentle, flapping through the surface water of the open sea and feeding on plankton and shrimps. No one knows exactly why Manta Rays leap out of water, but the sight is sure to take one's breath away.

Shark Ahoy!

While the Devilfish may not live up to its name, make sure to swim fast if you ever encounter a weird T-shaped head coming your way. This heralds the *Hammerhead Shark*, which is known to be dangerous to swimmers and divers. Its characteristic head, which looks like a hammer, is used by the shark as a rudder to help in rapid turning. The eyes located at the tip of the Hammer head enable this shark to see backwards as well as forwards. So don't expect to sneak up behind this one which is widely distributed in the Indian Ocean!

Armed to the teeth

If one can have a hammer for a head, why not a saw for a mouth? Well, the *Sawfish* has just that—a long, serrated saw-like snout. It uses its saw like a master craftsman slashing



through schools of fish as it swims, and for poking around the sandy sea bottom for food. Sawfish too are widely found in the Indian Ocean.

Motherly Fathers

A horse-like head, a tail like a monkey's, a pouch like a kangaroo has, and an armoured body—all combine to make a fish called *Seahorse*! The Seahorse swims in an upright position. When it wants to rest, it coils its tail around seaweeds or twigs in the shallow coastal waters where it is found. And if its appearance and habits aren't curious enough, here's a "curiouser" fact. The female puts her eggs in the pouch of the male seahorse. There they hatch and the father brings forth the young ones into the world, while the mother has long swum away. The little ones look exactly like the adults, but in miniature! And you don't have to go with Alice to Wonderland to see this curious creature. Seahorses are commonly found in our own coastal waters.

Umbrella with a Sting

Here's a fish that doesn't have a bone in its body. Fishy? What's more, it floats around like a transparent umbrella with tentacles. It's those tentacles that make the *Jellyfish* best kept at a distance. They can inflict a painful sting. The smaller fish are quite paralysed by the sting before they are eaten by this carnivorous fish. The "umbrellas" come in different sizes and shapes—bell-like, saucer-like, flat or round. Many kinds of Jellyfish are found in our waters. Floating in shallow waters, their glistening shapes make a pretty sight. Best admired from a distance, though!

Mistaken Mermaids

In the days of yore, sailors brought back tales of mermaids sighted rising from the sea. Now scientists believe that these "visions" may well have been *Dugongs* coming up for air. Dugongs are marine mammals. Slow and gentle, these vegetarians browse on algae and sea grass in the shallow coastal waters where they live. At regular intervals they break the water surface and come up to breathe. These simple creatures are easy prey and have been hunted for meat, skin, bones and fat. Once

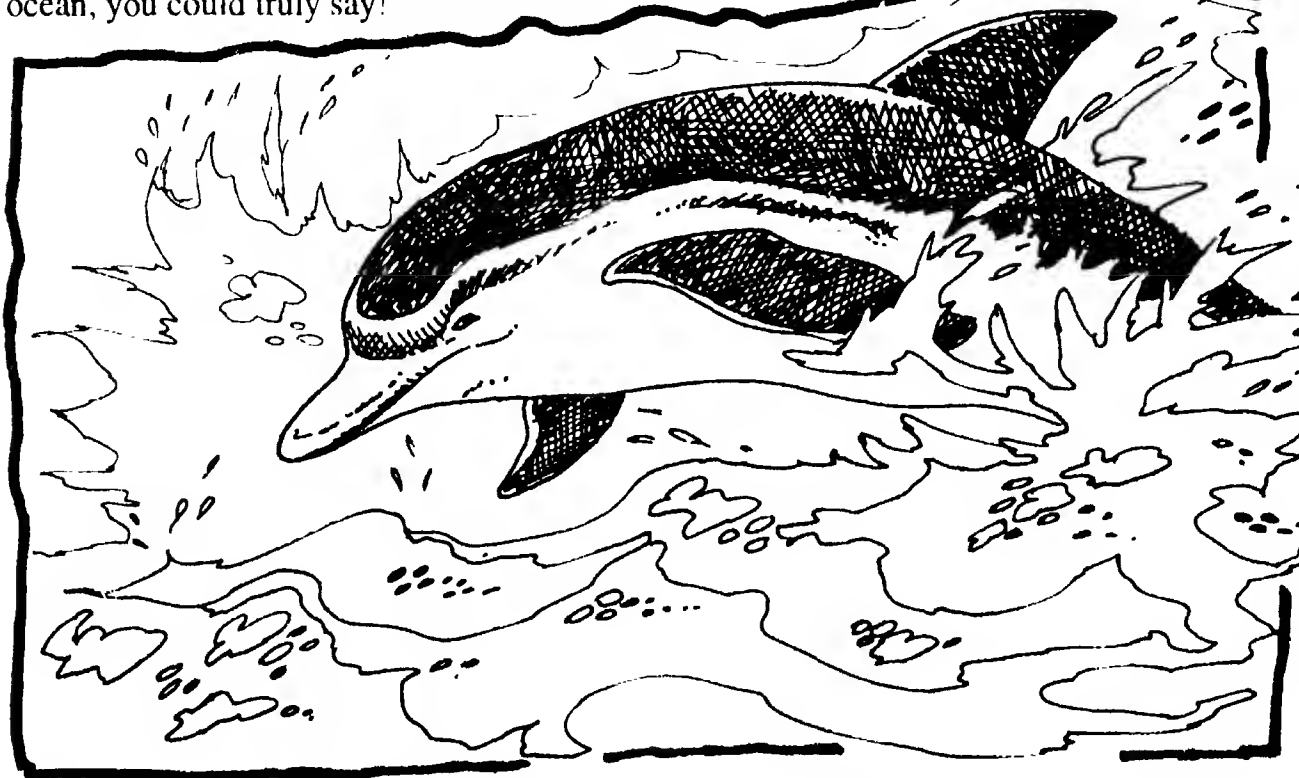


found in large numbers, today their existence is threatened. The Indian Ocean has one of the largest remaining populations of Dugongs. They are found in the Gulf of Mannar between India and Sri Lanka, in the Gulf of Kachch, as well as around the Andamans.

Dancing Dainties

These slender, graceful creatures move and hunt in large schools. These are *Dolphins*, social and friendly mammals that live in the sea. They even have their own language—high-pitched squeaks which obviously say a lot in Dolphin dialect! They have a sophisticated hunting technique based on existing high frequency sound waves, which bounce back indicating, the location and size of the prey. The Dolphin's mouth is long and beak-like and has at least 12 teeth. All the better to eat small fish and molluscs with! Two common species are found in our coastal waters, and others in the deeper waters of the Indian Ocean.

The next time you are near the sea, and gaze across the vast watery expanse stretching to the horizon, try to picture what lies beneath the surface. It's an incredible world, teeming with life. The characters you have just met can only give you a tiny peek into this unique conglomeration of marine life. Just a drop in the ocean, you could truly say!



Octopus' Garden

"I'd like to be, under the sea, in an Octopus' Garden" so goes the refrain of an old Beatles song which describes the delights of an imaginary, fun-filled place. If you really did get to be under the sea, what would you see?

Imagine a place where many of the words that you thought you knew well, turned out to mean something different. For example, the cool crisp fruit we know as a cucumber turned out to be an animal, or a mouse turned out to be a worm; or a moth was actually a fish!

Well, you wouldn't find these in a dictionary, but you would encounter them in the sea.

So hold your breath and plunge right into the watery world where words take on new meanings.

Sea wasp is a jellyfish with a poisonous sting which can kill a human in just three minutes. This 'wasp' has a large, almost transparent bell-like body with four long trailing clumps of tentacles.

Sea whip is a brightly coloured coral found on muddy parts of the sea bed. The tapering stems of the corals look like whips.

Sea butterfly is a tiny, shelled creature, measuring less than one centimetre. Some have delicate, almost transparent shells, and a pair of wing-like flaps for swimming.

Sea cucumber is a cucumber-shaped invertebrate that lives buried in sand or mud on the sea-bed. It has a soft, leathery skin and mouth surrounded by tentacles that collect the detritus it feeds on.

Sea gooseberry is a small, transparent animal found in all the oceans.

Sea hare is a slug-like creature. It has two, large fleshy flaps that hide a tiny shell. It uses the flaps as wings to propel itself through the water.

Sea mouse is a large, broad worm that lives near the low water mark on sandy shores. Its back is covered with long, grey bristles which shine in many colours.

Sea moth is a small fish with large fins that spread out from the sides of its body like wings. Its body is covered with bony plates. It has a long, tubular snout and a small mouth.

Sea rat is a tiny animal that forms pale crusts over rocks, shells and sea weeds. Each animal has a hard case. Often, many of these cases join together to form a colony that resembles a rat.

Sea robin is a fish with a bony head and large, fan-shaped pectoral fins which are strong enough to turn over rocks in search of food from the sea bottom.

Sea potato is a small, marine invertebrate which lives on sandy beaches where it burrows in the sand, leaving just a hole on the surface. It is covered with spines and feeds on algae.

That's just a glimpse of the weird and wonderful world beneath the waves.



Threatened Oceans

Meena Raghunathan CEE-NFS

The Indian Ocean which laps our shores is the world's third largest ocean. It is home to hundreds of thousands of life-form—from microscopic plants and animals to large creatures like dolphins and sharks. But today the health of all this life, as well as the waters that support it, is threatened. Threatened by human activities. And each one of us has a part to play in this. Even those of us thousands of miles inland have an impact on the waters of the oceans and hence on those that live in those waters.

Let's take a look at how and why.

Spreading danger

As the ocean waters circulate, so does the waste which is disposed into the seas. The effects of waste disposal can thus affect marine life in parts quite far from the point of disposal. Material reaching the sea from the land is called terrigenous material.

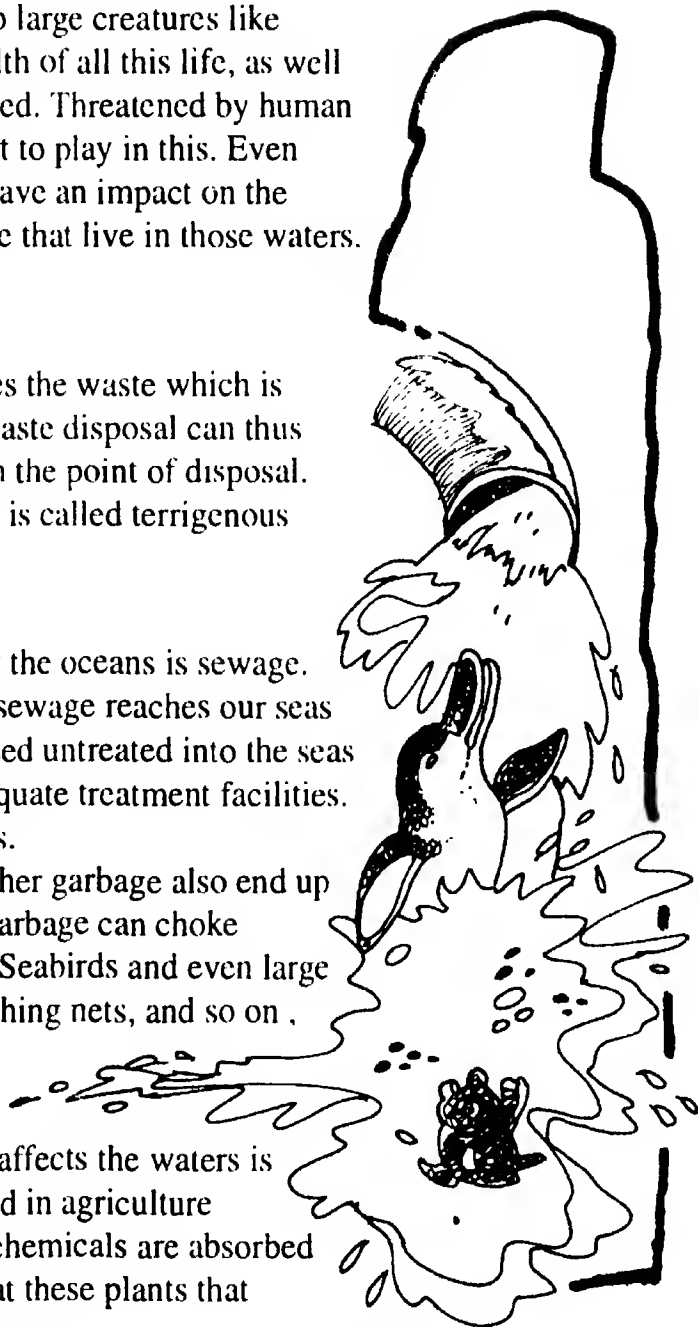
Murky depths

One of the obvious sources that dirty the oceans is sewage. Over 18,500 million litres of domestic sewage reaches our seas every day. Most of this sewage is released untreated into the seas because most cities and towns lack adequate treatment facilities. So this is a constant stress on the waters.

Tonnes of plastic, glass, metal and other garbage also end up in the sea from the land. Some of this garbage can choke creatures which swallow it by mistake. Seabirds and even large mammals get entangled in discarded fishing nets, and so on, sometimes with fatal results.

Deadly dumping

Another on-land activity that greatly affects the waters is agriculture. The chemical fertilizers used in agriculture ultimately end up in the sea. The toxic chemicals are absorbed by tiny plants in the water. Small fish eat these plants that



contain chemicals. Big fish eat small fish. These fish are then eaten by birds. With each link in this marine food chain, the chemicals do not pass out of the body but keep accumulating, and get more and more concentrated. All the creatures in the food chain are affected by the chemicals.

Industries situated along the coast often discharge untreated waste into the sea. This source of pollution is becoming increasingly significant as the number of industries increase. Apart from liquid and solid wastes, power stations and industries also cause thermal pollution of the seas. This is by release of hot water, which is used for cooling, into the sea. Other sources of pollution of sea waters include the mining of the seabed for minerals, port development activities, and aquaculture.

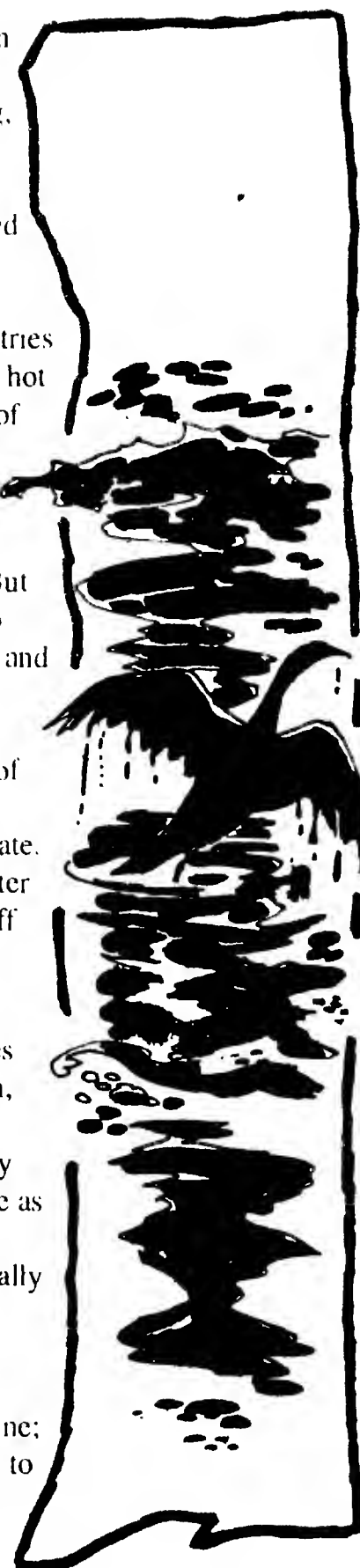
Oil and Water

The seas around India have considerable oil under them. But the process of exploring for this oil and extracting it, leads to pollution. Other sources of oil in the oceans are the pumping and spills from tanker operations, transferring and handling of oil cargoes, ship cleaning operations, and the like. Oil in the sea interferes with plant and animal life in many ways. Feathers of marine birds get covered with oil and they cannot fly. Other marine creatures also get coated with oil and choke or suffocate. Some oils are toxic to marine organisms. A film of oil on water also prevents transfer of oxygen into water, thereby cutting off vital life support to marine life.

Fish out of water

Another type of danger to the creatures in the oceans comes from over-fishing. In their greed to catch more and more fish, these days, some commercial fishing operations are using methods that may drive some ocean species to the brink. They fish in deep waters; they catch small fish which have no value as food but are the next generation; they fish even during the breeding seasons of the fish—something which was traditionally not done. All this is resulting in over-exploitation of some species, and may, in the long run, endanger them.

The pollution of the oceans is a serious threat because the oceans yield so much of our food; they are a source of medicine; they are a source of recreation. And, of course, they are home to innumerable marine species. The well-being of the oceans is vital to the well-being of the Earth.

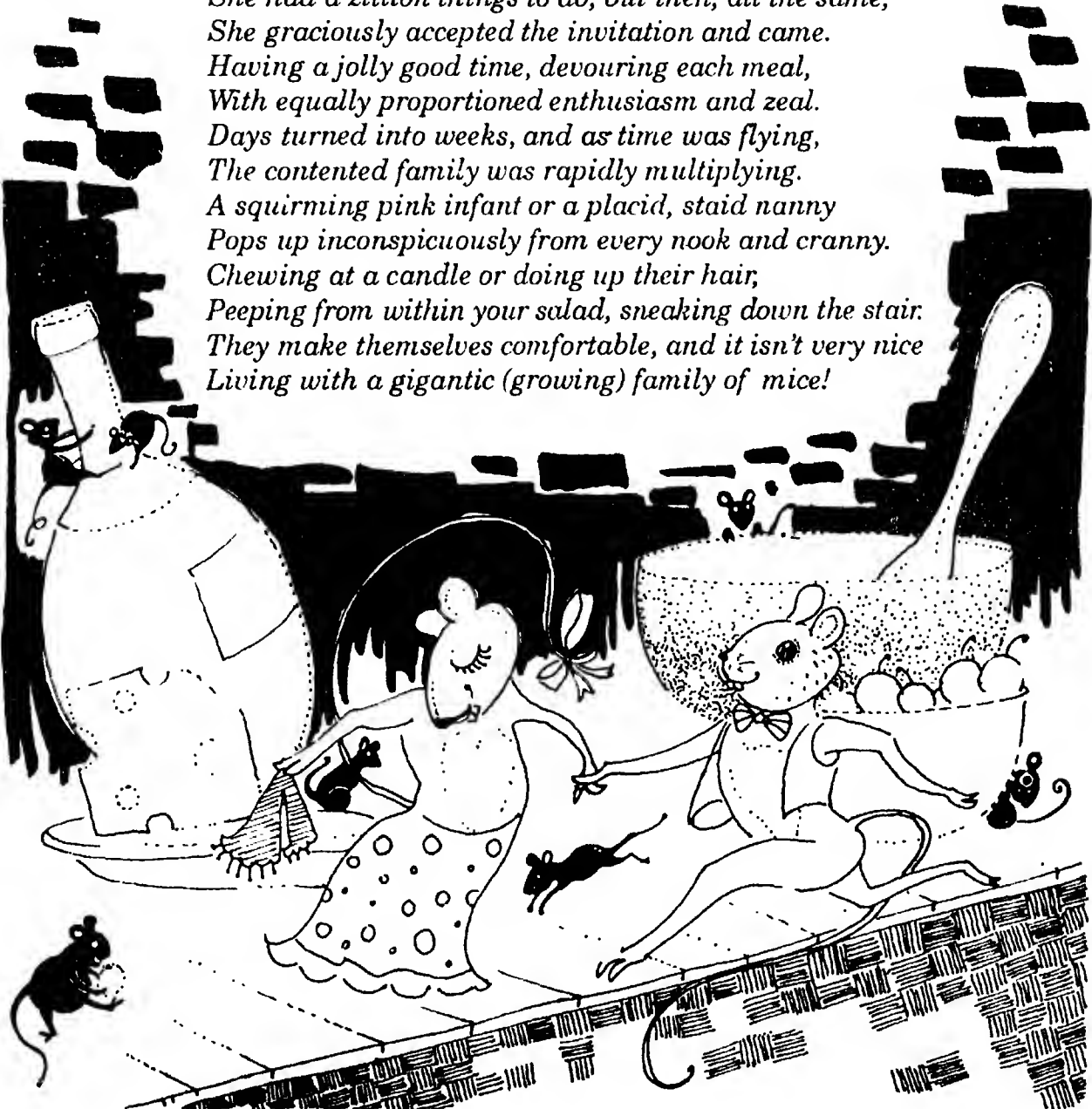


The Trouble with Mice

Merin Elizabeth Kuruville (13)

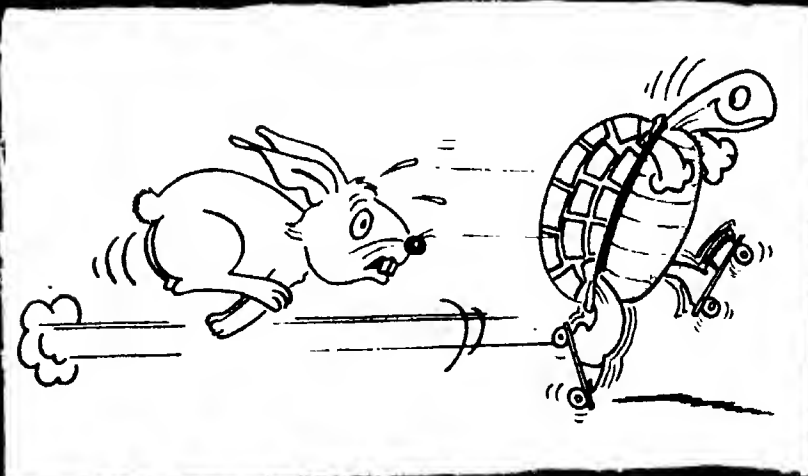
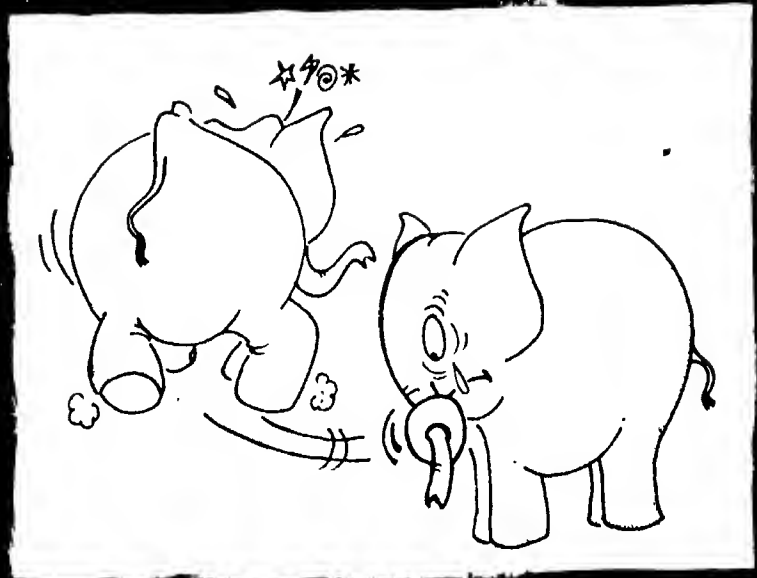
Illustrations: Ajanta Guhathakurta

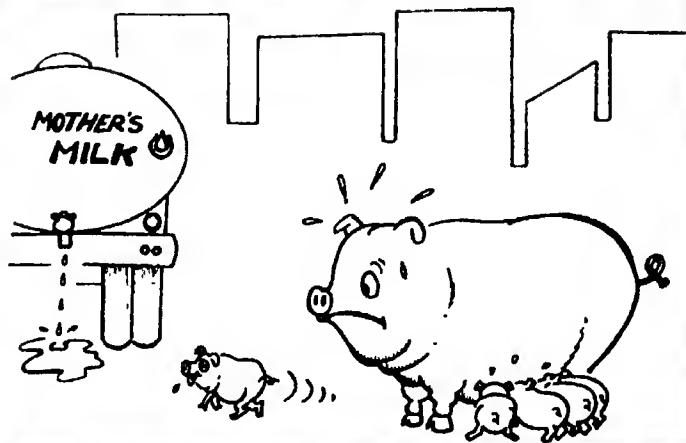
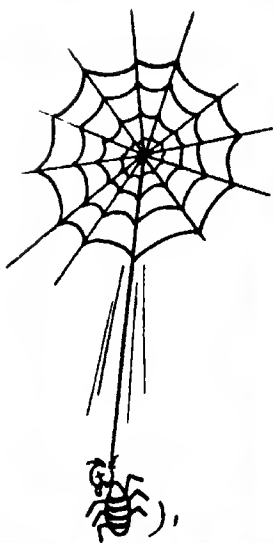
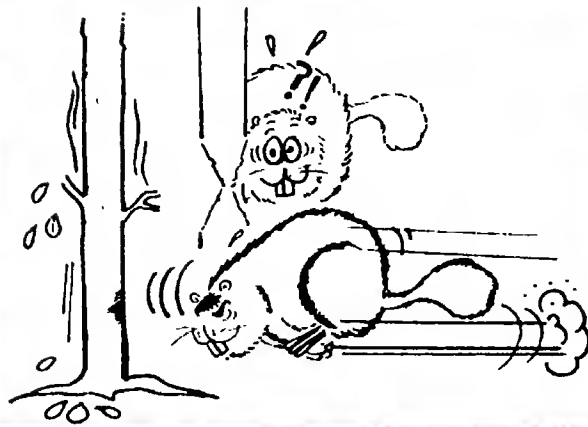
*A perfectly innocent, guileless little mouse,
Decided to pack and move into our house.
Armed with a trunk and bags, settled underneath,
He invaded our food with a few pointed teeth.
He licked a stamp on a telegram, and generously sent
For his darling, starved wife in all sentiment.
She had a zillion things to do, but then, all the same,
She graciously accepted the invitation and came.
Having a jolly good time, devouring each meal,
With equally proportioned enthusiasm and zeal.
Days turned into weeks, and as time was flying,
The contented family was rapidly multiplying.
A squirming pink infant or a placid, staid nanny
Pops up inconspicuously from every nook and cranny.
Chewing at a candle or doing up their hair,
Peeping from within your salad, sneaking down the stair.
They make themselves comfortable, and it isn't very nice
Living with a gigantic (growing) family of mice!*



Toons World

Ajit Narayan





Animal Welfare and Rights

Helping Hand Directory of Animal Welfare Organizations in India

**Compiled by Camellia
Satija**

**Published by KARE,
New Delhi**

Price: Rs.50

An animal lying in an undignified heap in the middle of the road, having been hit by a speeding vehicle and left to meet his end; a truck packed with crates stuffed with squawking birds for the table; a tonga driven by a horse with festering wounds; men throwing stones at or kicking stray dogs and cats—common sights these that make many of us turn away, sick at heart, because we

do not know what to do.

Now, thanks to *Helping Hand*, we can do something for these animals. Brought out by KARE—Kindness to Animals and Respect for Environment—a Delhi-based activist group, *Helping Hand* has information any animal-lover would treasure. It tells you where to go and whom to contact in case you find an injured animal or someone ill-treating an animal; or where to leave your pet when you want to go on a holiday, and so on and so forth. The book familiarises its readers with various laws like the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960,

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and some Acts specific to the city of Delhi, as also with enforcement bodies like the SPCA, other animal welfare organizations across India and much, much more.

The publishers hope, "This book... will help like-minded people to get together to strengthen the Animal Rights Movement and encourage young people to become more involved." Amen to that.

For more information write to: KARE, M-39 Main Market, Greater Kailash Part-1, New Delhi-110048

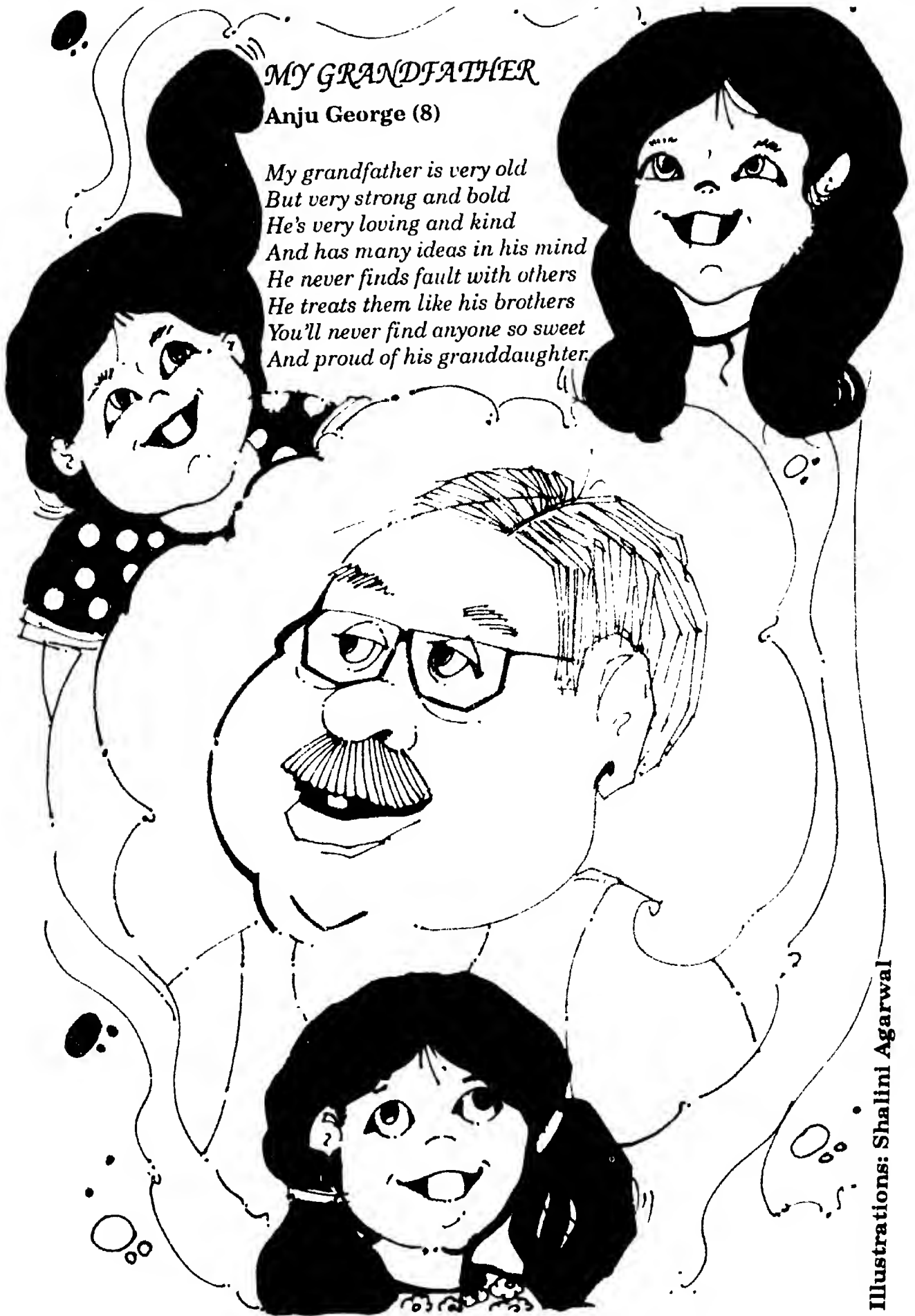
Bhavana Nair



MY GRANDFATHER

Anju George (8)

*My grandfather is very old
But very strong and bold
He's very loving and kind
And has many ideas in his mind
He never finds fault with others
He treats them like his brothers
You'll never find anyone so sweet
And proud of his granddaughter.*



Illustrations: Shalini Agarwal

Smallest, largest, tallest...

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

Plants are instrumental in sustaining life on our planet. They not only give us oxygen, but also help produce rain and regulate the temperature of the atmosphere. If one were to start enumerating the multitude of uses of trees, one would have to write an entire book on the subject. Suffice it to say that they play a role in every aspect of man's life, from providing him clean air to breathe, food, medicine, clothes and housing in addition to providing shelter for animals and the various other forms of life. Plants are remarkable since they grow in every kind of terrain and climatic conditions, except

perhaps in the Antarctica.

File away these facts about the most fascinating living things—plants. Trees, of course, are giant plants.

★There are more than 350,000 species of plants in the world.

★The oldest trees are the giant sequoia and bristlecone pines found in California. Some of the bristlecone pines have lived for between 4000 to 5000 years. The oldest sequoias are about 3500 years old.

★The smallest flowering plant in the world is called *Wolffia Arrhiza*. It is found in stagnant waters, forming a thick green cover and has no roots. These plants

flower in summer, but their flowers are so small that you need a microscope to see them!

★Which is the tallest tree in the world? It is the redwood tree, again found in California. Some of these can grow up to 110 metres. The eucalyptus tree found in Australia grows more than 90 metres tall.

★One of the most useful trees in the world is the coconut palm. Every part of the tree is used. South-east Asians are said to have more than 3,000 uses for its various parts, including getting timber and rope to fresh, nourishing coconut water. Isn't that some usefulness?

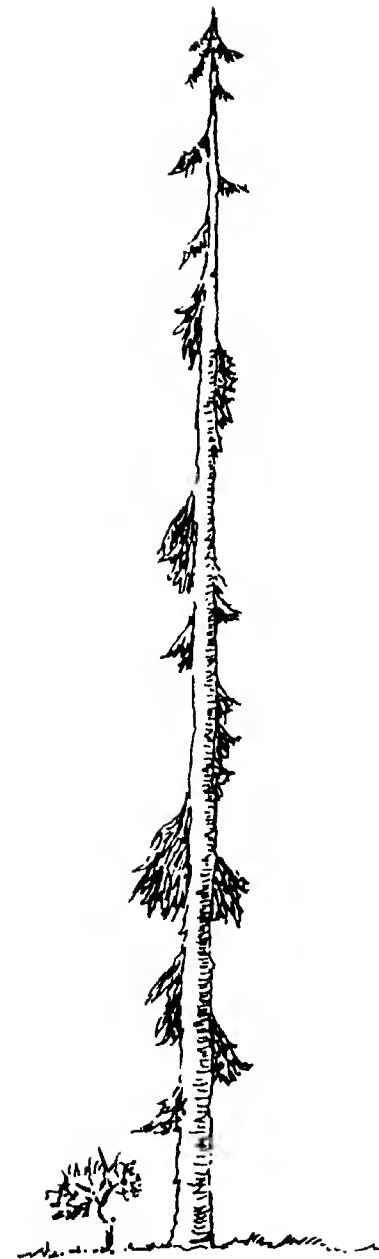
★The oldest species of plants is the **ginkgo**. It has been around for over a million years! Ginkgoes look like the present day palms. However, only one kind of ginkgo survives today and is an ornamental plant.

★**Tropical rain forests** cover about **7 per cent of the earth's area**. The total area covered by forests is about a third of the earth's surface.

★The **first land plants** appeared on earth about **430 million years** ago, during the Palaeozoic Era. Scientists believe that they were stick-like and did not have the water-carrying tissues found in the later day plants. They didn't look anything like the plants and trees of today.

★About 300 million years ago whole forests existed. About 100 million years ago, these trees started dying and got buried. One such fossilised forest, the **Petrified National Park**, is found in Arizona. **In India, the oldest plant fossils** are found in Arunachal Pradesh and are believed to belong to the **Silurian Age**, about 400 million years ago.

★Do you know why



some plants eat insects? Called **carnivorous plants**, they grow on soils that lack some important minerals like nitrogen. They are, therefore, equipped to catch and eat insects whose bodies contain these minerals. The most famous plants in this category are the **Venus' Flytrap**, the **Sundew plant** and the

Pitcher plant.

★About the **most hardy** tree in the world is the **Ombu** tree of Argentina. It can live with little water, survive attacks by pests, withstand the most violent storms and bear scorching heat. The wood is too moist to burn and too spongy to be cut down. Talk of the survival instinct!

★The **nuts** of the **coco-de-mer** tree are perhaps the **largest** in the world. Each nut weighs upto **23 kgs**. It is a double coconut palm found on the island of Seychelles in the Indian Ocean.

★A 600-year-old banyan tree in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, covers an area of **5.2 acres**. This is believed to be the **largest tree** in the world in terms of area covered.

★**Balsa** is the **lightest wood** and has a specific gravity of 0.12 to 0.15.

★The **Chipko Movement** is one of the most successful tree conservation campaigns in the world. It was started by Sunderlal Bahuguna and Chandi Prasad Bhatt in U.P. in 1973.

**Compiled by
Thangamani**

A MAGIC MOMENT

Story: Saibal Chakraborty

Illustrations: Shalini Agarwal

PALTU had become quite famous now. For a boy of thirteen to be known throughout Shibpore—a small town—was big news. But Paltu was not one who scored high marks in exams. Or made a clean sweep of all opponents' wickets, bowling from the high school end.

Yet, Paltu had his fans. Even the adults agreed that they were yet to come across a boy so gifted, when it came to performing magic tricks.

Paltu could not do the more complicated tricks. But he was quite adept at performing a half hour show of simpler feats. And no wonder, too! He was the nephew of the famous Khagesh Ghosh, better known as K.G.—a magician of forty years standing. It was he who had taught Paltu the

secrets of elementary magic. K.G.—sixty, tall and single, lived with his younger brother and Paltu's father, Ramesh. He devoted all his time to perfecting magic tricks and staging shows.

When Paltu began understanding magic, K.G. would take him to his shows and explain how a rabbit could be produced out of a hat or a white pigeon turned to a

bouquet of roses, simply by waving the wand. The boy was quick to learn these and delighted his friends during the tiffin hour in school. As word spread about how he was a budding P.C. Sorcar, Paltu had to show his skills to bigger audiences. Generally, these shows were held to celebrate the anniversary of a football club or for the birthday party of a kid of well-to-do parents.

This had been going on for a year or two when suddenly there was a break. Khagesh Ghosh left home one morning, leaving a note for his brother which said that he was going to the Himalayas and would probably spend the rest of his life there.

That was a big shock for Paltu. He loved his uncle and respected him for being a master in his



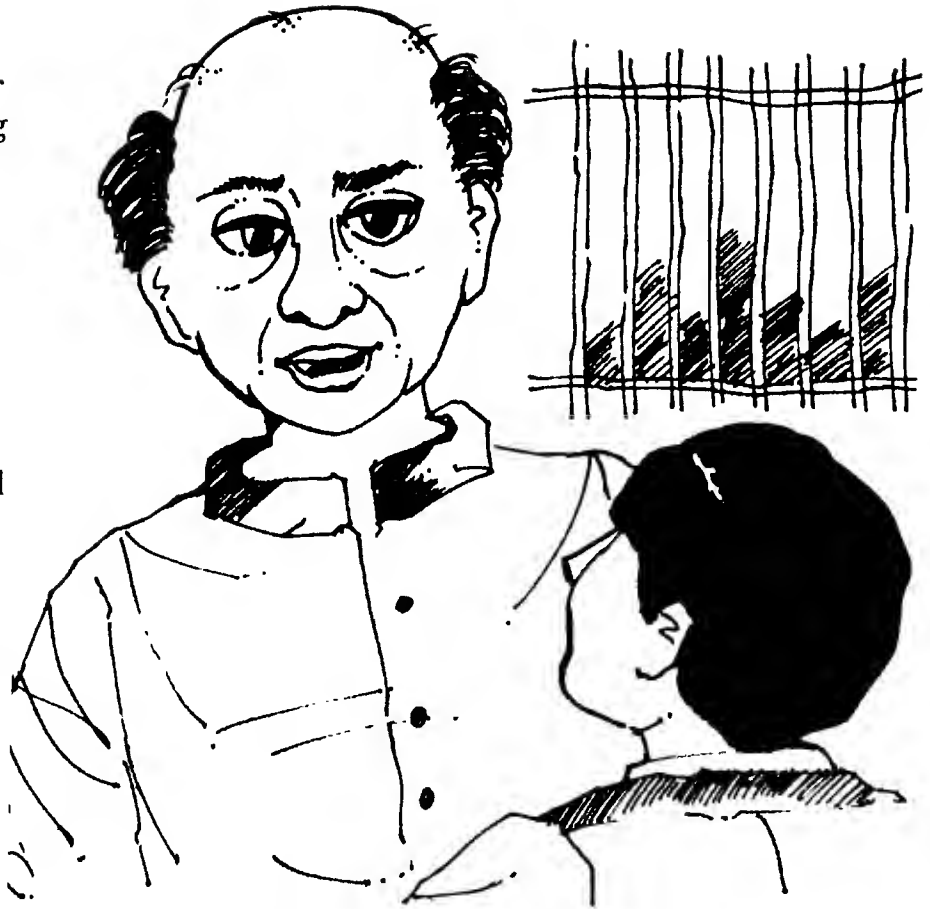
craft. His parents took time to reconcile to the old man's absence, but for Paltu the void was too big to be filled.

But he continued to practise magic and appeared before small gatherings. He felt sorry that his uncle had not taught him the more difficult items—like cutting a girl into two and uniting the parts again, or making people vanish, only to make them reappear. K.G. was a past master in the last game. He used to end his hour-long programme with this trick. A cracker would burst suddenly and the six-foot-tall showman wouldn't be anywhere on the stage.

"Here I am," his voice would be heard, just before the curtain came down, and people would see K.G. standing behind the rear row, smiling and waving his white handkerchief. Each time this had happened, Paltu wondered how he did it.

★

Uncle returned after a year and a half. He was a changed man now. Quieter and aloof. But what shocked Paltu most was his decision not to perform any more magic.



"That's all bunkum," he observed, when Paltu asked him when he intended to stage his next show.

"Never," he shook his head, "I don't want to pull the wool over people's eyes any longer."

Paltu was not sure how these words could be spoken by a man who had won the prestigious 'Magician of the year' award from the National Magic Circle thrice or one who had enjoyed a steady sale of tickets wherever he held a public show.

During his uncle's

absence Paltu had read books on magic, and using some of the devices had become known as Junior K.G. in many parts of Shibpore.

It was thrilling to get an applause from the crowd and it was equally depressing not to be able to perform a trick that the audience demanded.

Paltu was hoping that some day his uncle would find the Himalayas boring and return home. Perhaps then he might be persuaded to teach him the secrets of the tricks people like most.

Imagine Paltu's shock when within a week of his return, uncle expressed his strongest ever dislike for magic.

"I want to forget all that," he made a face, "and my advice to you is to give it a go-by and concentrate on your studies. You should work hard to get a national scholarship, like your father did. That should be your aim in life and nothing else."

It was difficult for Paltu to follow his uncle's advice in letter and spirit. He loved magic dearly

and there was quite a demand for him in the locality he lived in. There was only one snag. More and more people were asking him to perform feats which he had yet to learn.

Soon such a situation arose. He was the star attraction of the Boys' Library's silver jubilee celebrations. He sneaked out of his house at 4 p.m. to be at the library hall at 5 p.m., little knowing, however, that he was being followed by his uncle. Ever since old K.G. had come back home he

had been intrigued to find his young nephew leaving home occasionally (smartly dressed, as though he was to be present at the Governor's tea-party), and returning home late in the evening.

"Show us the vanishing trick," the same evening Paltu was confronted by a very demanding old man when he was half way through his stint of simple tricks.

"Yes, show us something thrilling," another gentleman seconded the demand. "Something striking, something..."

"Like your uncle used to," quipped an old lady. "That vanishing trick."

"But I don't know that trick," Paltu admitted.

"That's too bad," an elderly man got to his feet. "Old K.G. was a wizard at it, and you mean to say he didn't teach you that? That's ridiculous."

"Believe me," Paltu was almost in tears.

"We don't." This time the retort was stronger. "Make one of us vanish or disappear yourself."

There was an outburst of laughter in the packed auditorium. About a dozen people were now standing and making the



same demand.

Suddenly Paltu's eyes fell on a person in the middle row. It was his uncle in his overcoat, a walking stick in hand and a monkey-cap worn in such a way that it covered a good part of his face, but not the big, shining eyes.

Paltu shivered. So uncle must have come to see what he was doing here. He would definitely pull him up for still being in love with magic.

All of a sudden the uproar died down and hushed silence took its place. The audience had got something they had so long been hoping for. Paltu was not on the stage! The young fellow had at last performed the feat people had demanded. He had disappeared.

"See," the potato merchant told his son sitting next to him with glee, "he did it, but only under pressure."

"Now let's see when he returns," the old man tucked in a couple of 'paans' into his mouth looking pleased and elated.

But Paltu had no intention of doing so. He sneaked out of the auditorium and was now walking briskly towards his house, through a

narrow lane which took him to the main road. He wanted to reach home before his uncle did. The old man must be in his worst mood. Simply saying, 'I am sorry uncle,' might not do.

He would have to take his mother's help to save himself from uncle's fury.

But another shock was in store for him. He stopped to take a breath near his house when under the *neem* tree, he saw the man he dreaded most—his uncle.

Paltu could not figure out how his uncle had

reached the place before him. Maybe he had got a lift in a car with a friend. Perhaps it was through magic that he had made it so fast. Anyway, it was Paltu's duty to admit his fault first.

"I am sorry, uncle..."

"Ah, there you are," his uncle cut him short. "It was mean of you to put up a show without giving me any hint of it. I must say, it was really very mean..."

Paltu could not say that he did not dare speak about it to his uncle, because the old



man was so dead against it.

"But how come you are still a novice at performing the vanishing trick?" He frowned, "And people were making such a fuss over it."

"Look." Before Paltu could explain his problem, K.G. raised his hand and said, "From tomorrow I will give you tips on those difficult items people enjoy so much, and no doubt, the vanishing trick is one of them. That may be the right way to deal with people who pester a

showman so much that he has to flee from the stage... that is indeed 'disappearing' but not the way you did it.

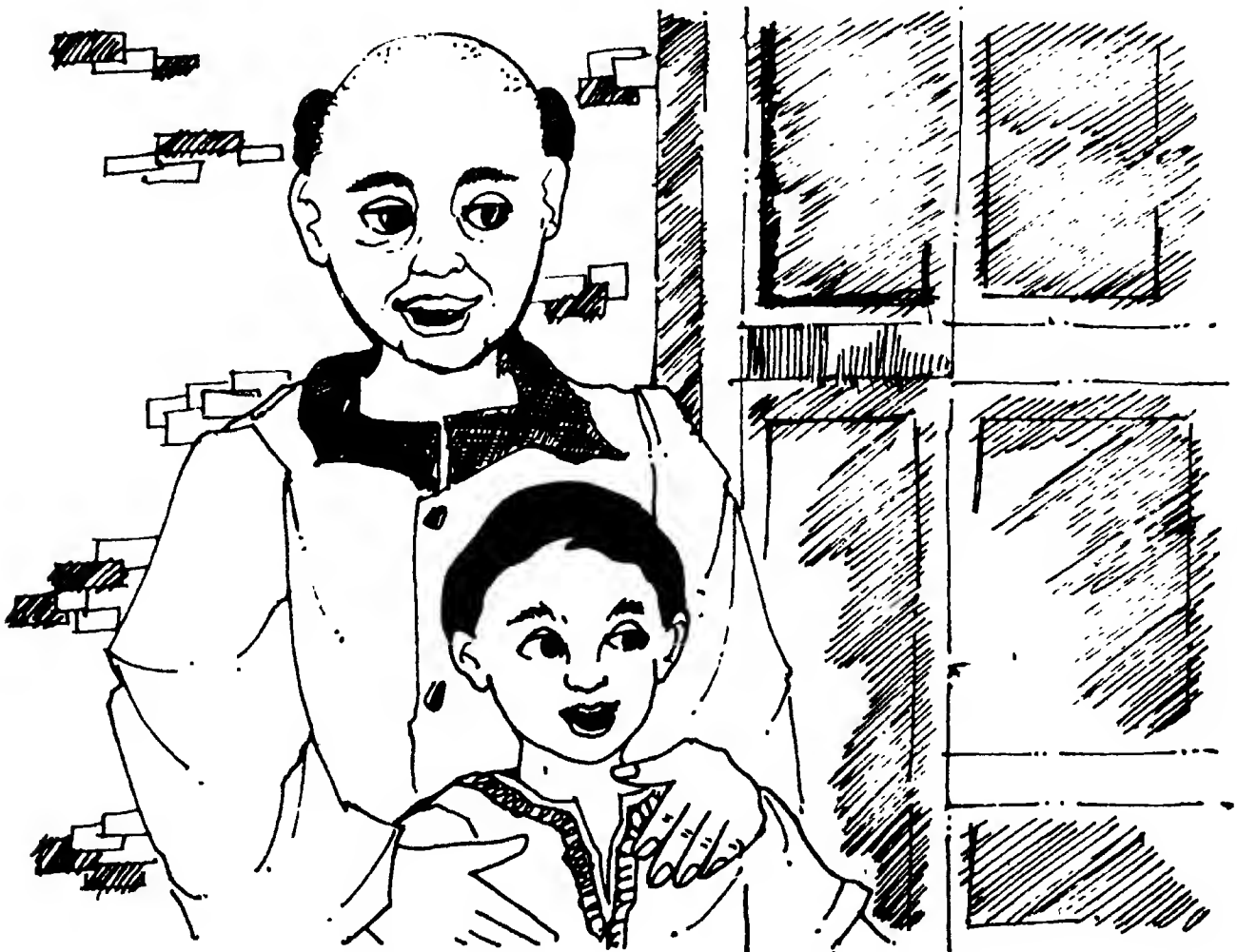
Reappearing is equally important." He laughed.

Paltu looked up at his uncle's face to make sure that these words were spoken by him and none else.

"Come on, I mean it. To be frank, seeing you perform on stage today thrilled me so much, that I feel like starting with it all over again," said old K.G. putting a hand on

his nephew's shoulder. Both entered the house, the former explaining how to maintain one's cool under pressure, and the latter listening with the attention of a devoted disciple.

Paltu wasn't sure that his uncle would tell him all the secrets of magic he knew. But he was certain that the one who had left home one summer morning had now returned. He felt it as clearly as the touch of his uncle's hand on his shoulder.



Rikki-tikki-tavi's Accomplice

Text: L. Balasubramanian

CEE-NFS

"TOWEET-tweet-tweet-tweet-tweet..." goes a little bird energetically and interminably from a perch on a wall near my window as I write this. It is *darzee*, the tailor bird, which has been immortalized by Rudyard Kipling in his saga of the mongoose *Rikki-tikki-tavi*.

Even otherwise, few people need an introduction to this small, sprightly bird which is a common sight throughout India. Its most characteristic feature is its tail, which it holds aloft proudly, almost perpendicular to the plane of its back. The bird is very fond of jerking its tail up and down in accompaniment to its piercing yet melodious calls. These calls are astonishingly loud for a bird which is much smaller than a sparrow.

Darzee has a rust-coloured head and brow, greenish-brown back and

wings, and white underparts. A black spot on either side of the throat becomes visible when the bird expands its chest to call. It has small, beady eyes and a long, pointed beak, except for the tail which is considerably longer in the male, particularly in the breeding season. Two middle feathers of the tail project an inch or more beyond the other feathers. The bird belongs to the warbler family which is a large and confusing assortment of hedge-loving birds.

The *darzee*'s most celebrated accomplishment and one

that has earned it its name is its peculiar way of building nests. It neatly stitches together two or more leaves with its beak using plant fibres. The cup thus formed is lined with soft materials. These curious nests are never very high from the ground but are marvellously hidden and so are not easy to find.

A busy, active bird is the *darzee*. It flits from twig to twig with remarkable swiftness searching for insects and other tidbits. It is immensely popular with children who love it not only for its cuteness, but also for its penetrating calls which make it easy for even infants to spot it.

I have a particular fondness for this tiny bird. We have recently shifted from a rural neighbourhood rich in bird-life to an apartment in a multi-storeyed complex in the middle of the city. The cheerful twittering of this redoubtable bird in a neighbour's garden reassures us that at least one of our feathered friends has not deserted us.

CROSSROADS TO

Mythologically Yours!

S.S.

October is festival time—a time to step into traditions and rituals. Let's see how aware we are of our country's festivals, legends and folklore.

CLUES

Across

3. The New Year's Day for the Sikhs which also commemorates Guru Gobind Singh's founding of the Order of the Khalsa (8)

4. The name of Vishnu's heaven situated on the slopes of Mount Meru (9)

7. The name of the boy who considered himself to be a disciple of Dronacharya and paid a unique 'guru dakshina' (7)

8. The place to which Jesus, son of Mary, belonged (8)

9. The king whose sons were Dhritarashtra and Pandu (13)

13. The person Arjuna disguises himself as in the Pandavas' thirteenth year of exile (10)

14. The first day of the Diwali festival, also celebrated in honour of

Dhanwantari, the physician of the gods (9)

18. The spring festival of the Parsis (6)

19. The name the Pandavas gave Khandavaprastha, the ruined city Dhritarashtra gifted them (12)

20. Ravana's brother, known for his enormous strength, insatiable strength and ability to sleep indefinitely (11)

Down

1. Parvathi's and Shiva's son who is given the first place of honour in religious ceremonies (7)

2. The architect of the gods who not only built their heavens, but also designed some of their weapons like Indra's thunderbolt, Karthikeya's lance and Shiva's trident (10)

5. Holika's brother and Prahlad's father whose arrogance and conceit brought about his death (14)

6. The name of Shantanu and Ganga's son who took the terrible vow of celibacy and came to be known as 'Bhisma' (9)

10. Another name of Hanuman, the great devotee of Rama (8)

11. Kunti's first child, the son of Surya (5)

12. The king whose annual visit to the earth is celebrated by his people as Onam (8)

15. The month at the end of which Id-ul-fitr is celebrated (6)

16. The seventh child of Devaki and Vasudeva, Krishna's elder brother (8)

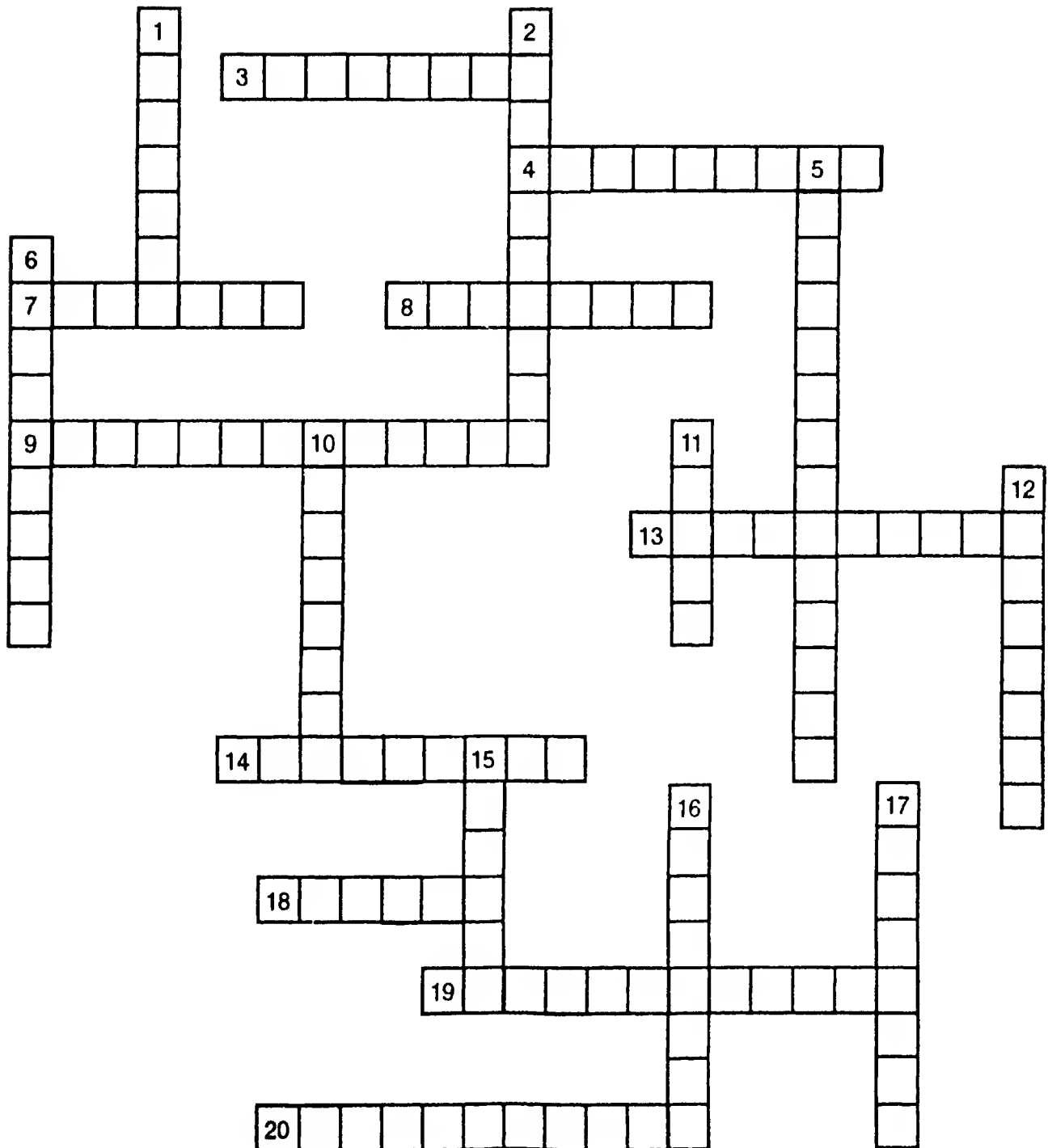
17. The Dandiya Ras is performed by the Gujaratis during the nights of... (8)

Rush in your completed crossword by October 25, 1996. The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year subscription to *Children's World*. Answers and results in December 1996 issue.

Capitals seem to be a strong point with our readers. We have got a tremendous response to 'Capitally Yours!' But the early bird gets the prize! Congratulations, Dona Samuel, New Delhi!

CROSSROADS 10

Mythologically Yours!



A Time to Laugh

Patient: Oh, doctor, I always feel I'm covered in gold paint.

Psychiatrist: That's just a gilt complex.



Girl (standing in the middle of a busy road): Officer, can you tell me how to get to the hospital?

Policeman: Just stay where you are.

Teacher: If you had ten rupees and you asked your father for another ten, how much would you have?

Student: Ten rupees.

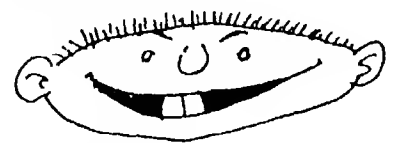
Teacher: You don't know your arithmetic.

Student: You don't know my father.



Raju: My kid brother thought a football coach had four wheels.

Sanju: So how many does it have?



Father: Who gave you that black eye?

Son: Nobody—I had to fight for it.



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Growing up in Malgudi

Reader of the Month: Navin Menon



WHAT do you do if you are 10... are bubbling with energy... live in a sleepy town... lead a life that revolves round the misery of homework and coping with unreasonable adults...?

Would you...
...become like Swaminathan—innocent but impulsive, quick to answer ‘stinging’

questions like, “Did our Jesus go gadding about with dancing girls like your Krishna? ...Did our Jesus go about stealing butter like that arch-scoundrel Krishna?” “If he did not, why was he crucified? If he was a God, why did he eat flesh and fish and drink wine?”

... or be like Sankar—a brilliant boy—who can solve “any problem in five

minutes.”

... or even Samuel ‘the Pea’—“bad in arithmetic... apprehensive, weak and nervous about things...”

...or, would you be like Rajam—“a great fellow... who wore socks and shoes... came to school in a car... spoke English like a ‘European’!”

How would you react if you are told these boys are all Swami’s friends.



Text: Sukhendu Dutta

Illustrations:

Shalini Agarwal

A STIR of excitement went round the house. Charles Robert Darwin, the distinguished scientist and naturalist, was coming to the house!

A young boy of the family came running to his brother excitedly, "Do you know Charles Darwin will visit our house?"

"Is it?" the boy was thrilled.

"Yes, he will spend a day in our country house."

In those days, joking and fooling others was a common and popular custom in England, specially among school children. So the two boys decided to play a trick on the great scientist.

They went round the open field of their village and caught a butterfly, a grasshopper, a beetle and a centipede.

It may seem brutal. They took the centipede's

body, the butterfly's wings, the grasshopper's legs and the beetle's head and glued them together. 'How satisfying it would be to fool the unsuspecting scientist! A smile spread over the face of the elder boy.

The small, white teeth of the younger one gleamed. The two laughed heartily.

In the evening, the two mischievous boys met the scientist in his room.

"Do you recognise this bug, Mr. Darwin?" The elder boy laid the thing on the table, unwrapping it with care from a handkerchief.

Darwin looked at the bug with curiosity.

"We caught it in the village field, sir!"

"Really?" said Darwin. The scientist, whose *Origin of Species* formulated and elaborated the theory of evolution, looked at the bug with suspicious eyes.

"Could you tell us what kind of a bug it is,

Mr. Darwin?" the boy asked again.

"Oh dear!" Darwin first looked at the boy and then at the bug. "It's certainly very extraordinary. The most amazing thing I have come across in my life!"

The two boys looked at each other and laughed to themselves.

"What is it, sir?"

"My dear friends!" A childlike smile spread over the scientist's face. "Did you notice whether it hummed when you caught it in the field?"

"Yes, sir!" The elder boy brightened up, full of excitement. "It hummed."

"Then, my little friends," Darwin threw an amused look at the boys, "it is a humbug!"

"Humbug!"

Involuntarily the cry escaped the boys' lips.

"I'm sorry if this upsets you!" said the scientist with a wide grin.

The boys flushed. With a hasty look around, the duo beat a quick retreat!

Story: Krishna
Narayan
Illustrations: Nilabha
Dhar Chowdhury

Raja Balwant Singh, ruler of the prosperous little kingdom of Kumbher, is worried. There are enemies around, threatening the sovereignty of Kumbher. They will have to fight their own battles, Raja Balwant Singh tells his son, Jai Singh, as their allies are in no position to help. The Raja is also certain that their enemies are being helped by his elder sister, Janki Devi and her son, Kunwar Singh.

The Treasure of Kumbher

Part 3

Barely a fortnight later, Raja Balwant Singh's worst fears came true. Ismail Beg attacked the fort of Kumbher.

It was, however, an attack doomed from the start. For one thing, Ismail Beg's army, like himself, was motivated solely by the prospect of quick gain. It was only through promises of an easy victory that Ismail Beg had managed to gather his men and keep them together. Such an army that bore no loyalty to its leader, nor to a



higher cause, was bound to lose.

Secondly, Ismail Beg chose the wrong time to attack. It was the height of summer, that terrible period before the rains, when the sun roasts the earth and the air sears the body like heat from a furnace. The weather saps the life-blood of man and beast, robbing them of any desire to win a battle. Ismail Beg's army was fatigued even before the first blow. Kumbher's troops, defend as they did from within the protective walls of the fort, were thus at an advantage.

Ismail Beg was aware that his bid to capture Kumbher held little chance of success. He had no choice, however. He was desperately short of funds; he was desperate for victory, however elusive. So, with his ragtag band of four hundred foot soldiers, two score horsemen and cannons, Ismail Beg stormed the Kumbher fort. He announced his intentions at dawn with a thunderburst of cannon and continued the barrage of shell fire for several hours.

Although there was hardly any reply from within, the fort stood

firm. The sun was setting, and Ismail Beg ordered that flares be lit so that the assault could continue.

Then, by sheer chance, two cannon balls struck at the same spot on the fort rampart which crumbled to its foundations. With a roar of triumph Ismail Beg rallied his men to the breach.

Just then the massive gates of Kumbher fort swung open. A body of horsemen, with Jai Singh at their head, poured out of the gates, swords drawn. The battle-cry of Kumbher rent the air. Simultaneously, the hitherto silent ramparts burst alive with a hail of gunfire.

Ismail Beg's army was taken completely by surprise at this counter-attack. Jai Singh and his cavalry charged at them in an unending wave and mowed them down like ripe corn in the fields. Ismail Beg tried to regroup his men but in vain. Finally, he too turned tail and fled.

Ismail Beg's hasty and ill-fated bid had failed. Kumbher was safe.

★

That night there was muted rejoicing in Kumbher. Chandravati

arranged for continuous prayers and offerings in temples all over the city. She led Jai Singh to the family deity installed within the palace. In the presence of the deity, she presented him with a scabbard of beaten gold.

"A strange gift, dear sister," said Jai Singh with a smile. "Surely you don't wish that I go to battle in order to wear this?"

"I hope your sword remains sheathed forever," said Chandravati. Her large eyes brimmed with tears.

Jai Singh put his arms around her affectionately. "You must not worry," he said, "Ismail Beg is soundly beaten. There is no more threat. Come."

Together they crossed the lamp-lit courtyard to the western end of the palace and ascended the stairs. Jai Singh left his sister in her chamber and was returning to his own room when the noise of unusual activity in the hall below caught his ear. He went down to investigate. He came upon a strange sight.

Raja Balwant Singh was seated on his throne. Before him stood two guards and between them they held Kunwar Singh, Janki Devi's son. Kunwar



Singh was hunched forward, his head against his chest.

Jai Singh looked askance at his father. Raja Balwant Singh

ignored him.

"What is the meaning of this?" inquired Jai Singh of the guards.

"Thakur Kunwar Singh was leading the enemy

through a gap in the western wall," replied the guard. "That part of the fort was left undefended while we rode to the main gates."

"I was on patrol when they entered," said the other. "There were about twenty of them. I raised the alarm. Some of our troops arrived and we managed to beat them back."

"I lost a dozen of my best men," said another voice. It was Fauj Ram, one of the king's commanders. "Were it not for them, Kumbher could have been taken from within."

Jai Singh looked at Kunwar Singh in disbelief—a member of the royal family helping Ismail Beg? "Why did you do it?" he demanded. "For God's sake, why?"

Kunwar Singh shook off the guards who held him. He was a man of medium height, overweight. He was about forty years of age, although his flabby figure made him look ten years older. His shifty, black eyes were defiant.

"I would do it again," he said. "What have we gained, my mother and I, by being loyal to the throne? I know you, Jai

Singh. You hate us! We will forever live on nothing but crumbs from your table."

Jai Singh was thunderstruck. He stepped forward, arm raised aloft, then checked himself. Kunwar Singh was twice his age.

"Is that all you betrayed us for?" he exclaimed. "You fool, do you really believe that I would cheat you out of your due, while Ismail Beg would safeguard your interest?"

"I want my share of the royal fortunes," said Kunwar Singh sullenly.

"You shall get what you deserve." All eyes turned towards the throne. "Throw him into the cells, Fauj Ram," ordered Raja Balwant Singh. His voice was cold. "Kunwar Singh shall be hanged at dawn tomorrow.

The blood drained from Kunwar Singh's face and he collapsed on the floor. No one moved. There was silence in the palace hall.

At that moment an elderly woman rushed into the room. She let out a shriek when she saw the prone body. She whirled around to face the king.

"What have you done to him?" she screamed. "May

the gods strike you dead, Balwant Singh, for seeking to kill my son!"

"Janki Devi, you are distraught," said the king. "Not a hair on his head has been harmed."

"Mother, save me!" cried Kunwar Singh, clutching at the hem of her dress and quivering like a jelly. "They are going to hang me!"

Janki Devi's jaw dropped in horror. She looked up. Her brother's expression held no mercy. She searched Jai Singh's face. "Save my son!" she pleaded, falling at his feet. Jai Singh moved back, embarrassed.

"Your Highness may wish to reconsider his decision," he said, addressing his father.

"You waste your breath, Jai Singh," said the king sharply. "The penalty for treachery is death."

"Father, Thakur Kunwar Singh is of royal blood. He cannot be treated like a common criminal. I beseech you to spare his life."

Raja Balwant Singh turned his head away. The guards hoisted Kunwar Singh off the floor and prepared to take him to prison. Jai Singh tried for the last time.

"Father, if anything were to happen to me after your time, there is none but my cousin Kunwar..." he did not finish the sentence, but the meaning was perfectly clear: Kunwar Singh was second in line to the succession of the throne.

There was a long pause. Everyone in the room waited with bated breath.

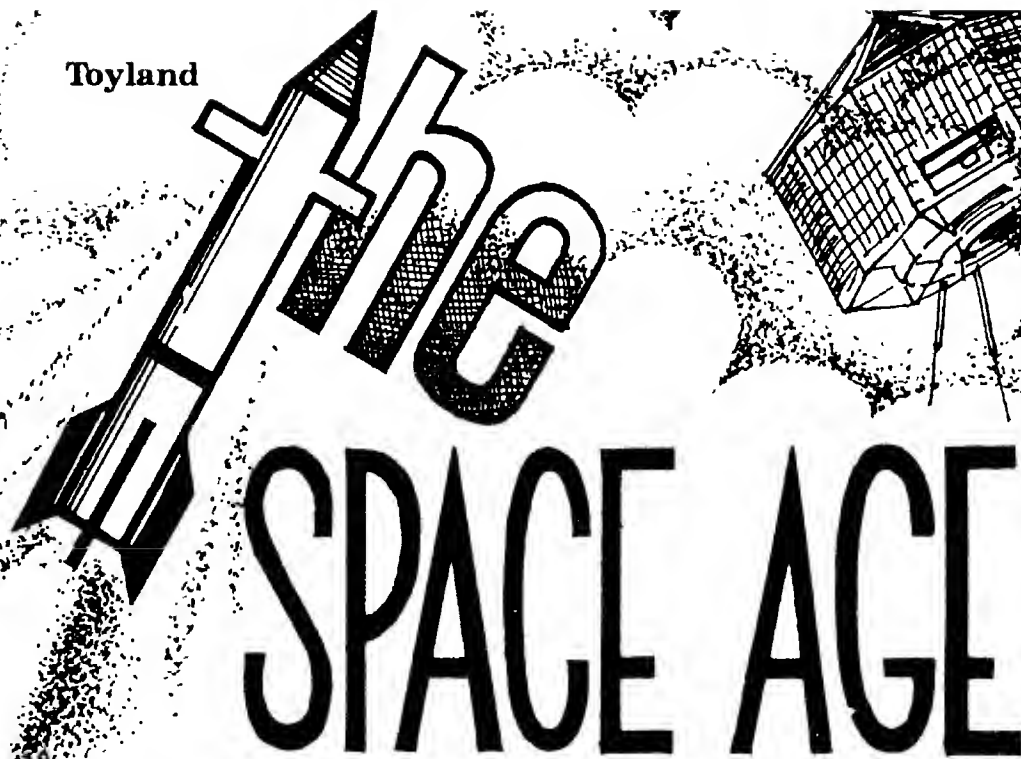
"Let him go," said Raja Balwant Singh at last.

Kunwar Singh shrugged himself free. He seethed with humiliation, but was crafty enough to hide his feelings. Janki Devi rose to her feet and took his hand. Her face was ugly with hatred. Instead of expressing her gratitude, she gave her brother a look of pure poison before she swept out of the hall. The king watched them go, knowing he had won himself an implacable enemy.

"We did not do the right thing, Jai Singh," he said. "You insisted that a traitor be set free, and I was foolish enough to agree. Anyhow, send word to Madhoji Sindhia that we need his help. The snakes which lay hidden so long have now come in to the open. When they strike, we must be ready."

To be continued

Toyland



The SPACE AGE

Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

OCTOBER 4, 1957, was perhaps like any other early autumn day. But on this day, Science reached a new milestone in its march.

A Soviet satellite, Sputnik, was sent into space, to orbit the earth. It beamed some useful information 588 miles from above.

With it the space age was born.

Though the event was of a totally different kind, nothing so sensational had happened in the world since the U.S.A. dropped the first atom bomb on Hiroshima in 1945.

A month later the Soviet Union repeated its feat in a bigger way. The second Sputnik it launched carried a passenger—a dog called Laika.

The Americans had been making their own forays into space. On July 20, 1969, they took a giant leap upward. Neil Armstrong set foot on lunar soil. Man's centuries-old dream at last came true.

In the 19th century, Jules Verne gave his imaginary voyages to the moon a scientific touch. His novels were what we now call science fiction.

After him, H.G. Wells

wrote *The First Men in the Moon*. He even penned *The War of the Worlds* in which some Martians invade our earth.

Now whole volumes have been written on the novels and stories in which men have gone to the moon and the planets. Or the dwellers of some other worlds have come down to ours.

A word that came into use in the papers and everyday talk was astronaut. It means one who travels into space beyond the earth's atmosphere in a suitable vehicle.

The word is modelled

on Argonauts—Jason and the other heroes—who, in the Greek epic, go in the ship *Argo* in search of the Golden Fleece.

You know that whenever something is invented or something new comes up, its miniature model is also made. It becomes a new toy for children.

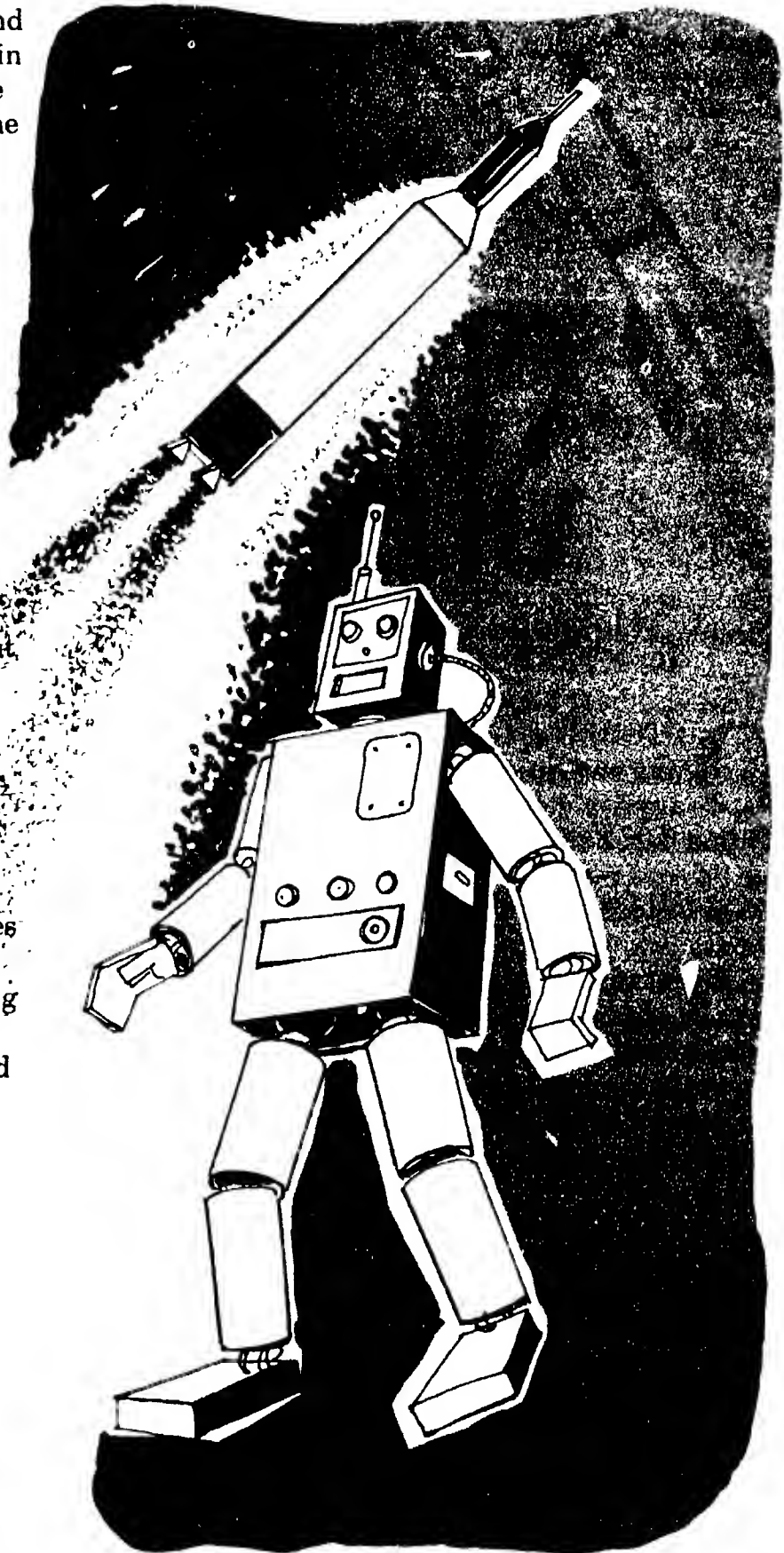
Rockets seem to be things of our own times. But crude rockets have long been there. And toy rockets too.

The *hawais* you send zooming up into the air at Divali and other celebrations are toy rockets. Some just explode in the sky. Some others, also scatter red, blue, green and golden stars when they burst.

The rockets or satellites that go up into space are very sophisticated. Among other things, they are fitted with computers and robots.

Some children use small computers almost like toys. They play computer games too. Some others pursue their hobbies with electronic kits.

Robots are machines some of which look like men. Though their movements seem clumsy, they work with the ease



and efficiency of the strongest of men.

On the moon's surface digging and loading was done by the robots.

Like toy computers, there are toy robots too. These are tin or plastic dolls that move or walk rather funnily. Some even make unearthly sounds.

Glow friends that seem to be from another world look attractive. They are colourful little animals that really glow in the dark.

After the launching of Sputniks, Russian circuses celebrated their country's achievement by merrily displaying models of artificial moons. Schools staged space plays. Or they set up small space stations where, as if from another planet, boy astronauts made dramatic landings.

Interest in planetariums also increased. A planetarium is a place for simulating the movement of the planets. Small or toy telescopes became popular.

A company that makes moulded toys has come up with what it calls Masters of the Universe. These toys are muscular men with strange armours. Equally strange are their

weapons. They seem to have been picked up from a medieval arsenal. And warriors drive curiously wheeled or four-legged vehicles. The company has also created some curious animals and large lizard-like ships.

Add to these Castle Grayskull and Snake Mountain. A castle generally belongs to the Middle Ages. But here you see a cross between the medieval and the mythical. No wonder its Lord is a speaking skeleton in a battledress.

About three years ago a

most unexpected thing has happened. What may be called 'older' than the oldest toy came into being. It is the dinosaur.

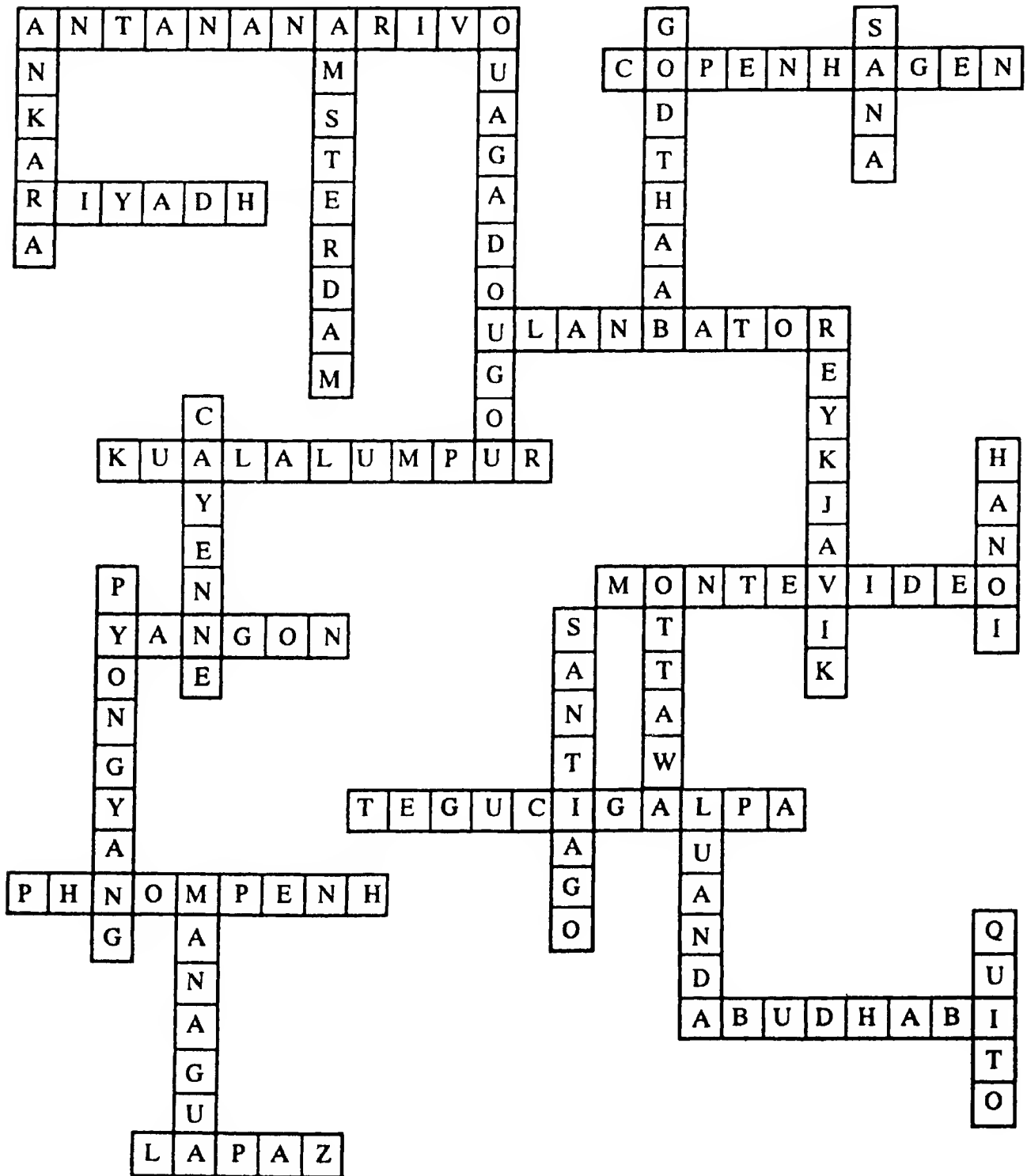
It all began with the Hollywood film, *Jurassic Park*. The film is about the beasts that roamed the earth millions of years ago. Hardly any of the animals we are familiar with today were there then.

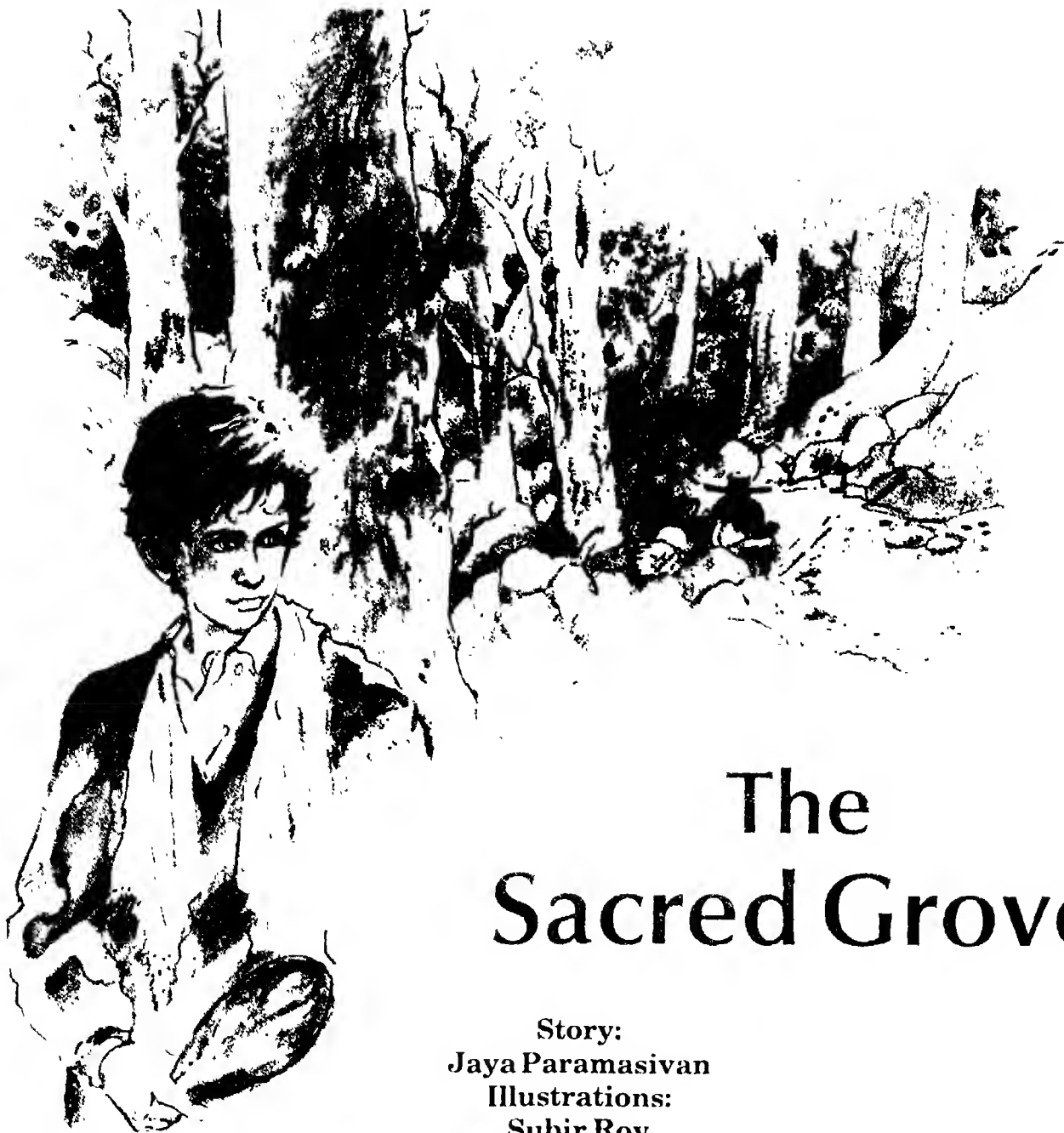
The film aroused a lot of interest in India. Soon a new toy that jostled with the others in shops was the plaster of Paris dinosaur.



Answers to CROSSROADS 8

Capitally Yours!





The Sacred Grove

Story:

Jaya Paramasivan

Illustrations:

Subir Roy

Stories or recipes, Jaya Paramasivan took delight in contributing to 'Children's World' in her own inimitable way. She passed away suddenly on August 27, 1996. We reproduce here, as a remembrance for our readers and her admirers, one of her most loved stories. 'The Sacred Grove' was originally published in the Children's World Annual Number. —Editor

ROSHAN was delighted with Willie's invitation to accompany him to the latter's ancestral home in the hills for their holidays. Roshan was just recovering from a serious illness and since everyone insisted that a change of scene would do him good, Willie's offer was very welcome. Willie was not

only his neighbour, but a good friend too. In their midteens, they studied in the same class. They had become close friends when they found to their delight that they shared a lot of common interests—among them rock music, science fiction and hiking.

Exuberant, ever-smiling and pleasant in manner, as most of the people from



the hills are, Roshan found a lot of enjoyment in Willie's company. He longed to visit the hills when Willie spoke nostalgically about them. And now the opportunity had come so unexpectedly.

"The nippy air and clean climate will do him a world of good, believe me," said Willie's father when Roshan's parents

had hesitated to send him to such a distant place to convalesce. "It's only for a few weeks anyway... enough to perk him up."

"Do not worry about their lessons," Willie's parents assured Roshan's father when he expressed his fears about the lessons he had missed. "We've got a neighbour, Mr. Dutta, a retired school master, who has been helping Willie whenever he goes home for the holidays."

Thus, encouraged by their neighbours, Roshan accompanied Willie to the far Eastern hills for his holidays.

It was Roshan's first visit to a hill station. The clear, blue skies, the long stretches of undulating, soft, velvety hills, dotted with clusters of thick woods, the bubbling streams of sparkling water—everything looked so magical and worked like a tonic on him.

Willie's grandmother, Kong Bina, a sprightly old lady in her seventies, lived in a picturesque cottage just outside the village. The cottage was surrounded by a vast farm where she raised poultry and livestock. Fruit trees grew in abundance, bordering the rows and rows of vegetable patches. Kong Bina bustled around

the place, personally supervising the work of the farm hands.

Kong Bina welcomed the youngsters with delight.

"Ah," she said to Roshan, the evening of the day of their arrival, "this is just the place to put the roses back in your cheeks. Here," she said smilingly plying them with fresh farm eggs, milk and freshly baked cookies, "you must eat plenty of these healthy foods. And this speciality of mine." She gave him a small glass of rich red coloured brew, "Cherry wine—made by me here and famous everywhere. A glass of it taken everyday will cheer you up."

Roshan smacked his lips appreciatively when he tasted the sweet drink.

"Rest for a while now," she said later, showing them their rooms. "Ah, yes," she added.

"Mr. Dutta had to leave suddenly on family business and will be back after a week. So," she laughed mischievously, "there's no need to bother about studies for a while."

Roshan revelled in her hospitality. With Willie taking him for long walks down the valleys in the warm sunlight, his earlier lethargy and listlessness

began to leave him and he felt increasingly healthier as the days passed by. Willie took him to the neighbouring hamlets nestling in the valleys to witness football matches and archery competitions. In the evenings they reclined in chairs by the fireside, listening to the quaint folk tales told by Kong Bina.

"I never knew bird calls could sound so musical," exclaimed Roshan one morning as they walked along a new trail.

Willie grinned and said, "Each day reveals a new adventure, isn't that so? Come, I'll take you to a special place today."

He led him through a trail which ran through the valleys and dales and ended at the summit of a hillock. They stopped by a couple of dolmens—vertical and horizontal stone slabs marking the cemetery of ancient people—to admire the panorama below.

"An ideal spot for departed souls," began Roshan feeling the stones gently. "Hey," he suddenly exclaimed as his eyes dwelt on the thick foliage down in the valley. "What's that? It appears so rich in its growth... much denser and magnificent, too."

Captivated by the beauty of the picturesque setting, he paused, staring at the thick woods.

"That's the place, the special place, I wanted you to see," said Willie getting to his feet. "It's known as the Enchanted Forest or the Sacred Grove," he added in a mysterious whisper. "You can call it the most beautiful place in the country."

"Ah, come on," laughed Roshan, his laughter suddenly sounding too loud. "Everyone says the same thing about their own State. Surely there are..."

"HUSH!" Willie whirled round to face Roshan who blinked in surprise.

Willie's cheerful face had suddenly become solemn and serious. "People don't make loud noises here. Please follow me silently. I assure you, you'll be fascinated by the place. Come."

Roshan dismissed Willie's sudden outburst as the sensitive reaction of any local resident proud of his State's natural bounty. As they approached the fringe of the wood he began to feel intrigued by its cool environment. It was enchanting with its canopy of thick, tall trees,



their trunks covered with a variety of creepers. Rich ferns blanketed the ground.

Suddenly Roshan became aware of the stillness. Just as they reached the fringe of the woods, a line of village women appeared from the side, climbing up the slope, carrying on their backs, baskets containing pots of water from the stream flowing below. As they passed the youngsters,

they greeted them softly with a smile.

Roshan was amazed. There was not a 'cheep' to be heard as they entered the dense grove. Even birds seemed to respect the place. Sunlight streaking through chinks in the leafy canopy threw brilliant patterns on everything below. There was moisture everywhere. Only the muted sound of a gurgling brook, flowing

somewhere ahead, broke the ethereal silence. But the song of the brook, too, blended softly with the serene atmosphere.

Boots crunching softly, Roshan and Willie picked their way carefully over tree roots entangled thickly with large ferns and creepers. Orchids of myriad shapes and delightful hues hung from the branches of trees.

"Splendid!" breathed Roshan softly as they



paused near a boulder by a small stream.

"Yes," whispered Willie. "Isn't it marvellous?" he added pointing to the ground, "This stream, if you notice, is being fed by the rich humus. The thick carpet of leaves, acting as a sponge, soaks up the rain-water and releases it slowly into the stream."

Roshan looked down curiously at the soft, spongy ground from where little rivulets of water slowly made their way to the stream.

"Many species of trees, believed to be long extinct elsewhere, have been found here," Willie went on, gazing about him in pride. "And...No!" he cried out sharply in warning as Roshan stooped low to pluck the soft leaf of a fern. "No one is allowed to pick up even a dry leaf from this place.

Vandalism is an unforgivable sin here. Come," he beckoned to the bewildered Roshan as they proceeded deeper into the woods, "I'll show you the heart of the wood—where the wood sprites gather."

"Sprites?" echoed Roshan, his voice breaking slightly. Clearing his throat he asked, "You mean those

goblins, fairies and such..."

"Hush!" silenced Willie. "Remember not to raise your voice here, and please don't mock."

Respecting Willie's wishes Roshan followed him silently till they reached a small clearing where a large stone bridged the stream.

It was a delightful spot from where one could watch the crystal clear water flowing by. Sunlight sparkled like jewels on the water. The boys sat absorbed by the scene for a while.

Suddenly Roshan felt a strong urge to pick up something as a souvenir to carry away with him, to remember the enchanting moments spent in the woods. He saw a small piece of driftwood bobbing in the stream near the edge of the stone bridge. It had a strange, sculpted look about it. Giving in to the temptation, Roshan quietly picked it up when Willie was not watching, and shoved it deep into his jacket pocket.

"The sprites will not mind, I am sure," he thought to himself. 'After all I've not indulged in any vandalism.'

Later in the evening

when he was alone in the room, Roshan pulled out his precious memento for a closer look.

"Wow!" he exclaimed as he held it closer to the light, "what an exquisite piece!"

The smooth, pale wood, shaped like a hand mirror, had in its flat, oval-shaped side, a knobiness that was almost carved. It looked like the head of a human being! "What fine handiwork of nature!" Roshan whispered in awe, running his fingers lightly over the surface. "So much like a human face...so skilfully sculpted...as if by human hands! Long face...deep set eyes...flat nose...bulging forehead...marvellous indeed!"

Suddenly a twinge of guilt assailed him. 'Have I done something wrong to have picked up this piece stealthily...' At once he shook his head to dismiss the thoughts. 'Enough of my wild imaginings...' he chided himself as he thrust the wooden piece deep inside his haversack.

That night he had a strange dream. But in the morning he could only remember it vaguely. A small man, wearing a broad brimmed, dark hat, sat on a stone with his

Grove."

Roshan's heart sank at the thought of going down alone to the forest. But it would be easier to replace the driftwood if he went alone and he would return quickly. So having assured Willie that he could find his way to the forest without difficulty, Roshan pulled out the driftwood from his haversack and shoved it quickly into the pocket of his jacket. He did not even want to see the sculpted face. All he wanted was to get rid of it.

Hurriedly finishing his breakfast, Roshan ran through the valley. In the bright, clear daylight, the anxiety of the previous night seemed to fade. He sighed with relief to see some villagers walking down towards the stream.

'Everything appears normal,' he assured himself trying to calm his racing heart as he took long strides down the velvety slopes towards the thick, silent woods. Once he entered the woods, he slowed down and proceeded carefully through the thick vegetation.

The gurgling of the stream was the only sound as he approached the stone bridge on which

he had rested earlier. Quickly he went to the spot from where he had picked up the driftwood.

'There,' he thought to himself with relief as he pulled out the wooden piece from his pocket, 'all I've got to do now is to place it exactly where I'd picked it up from and hurry back.'

Just as he leaned over to drop it in the water he glanced at the driftwood and froze in horror! The face sculpted in the oval part of the wood was *not* that of Mr. Dutta but *his*!

Trembling with shock he continued to stare at the young face etched on it. At that precise moment, he sensed a presence behind him!

Roshan whirled round in terror and the driftwood dropped from his hands into the stream. He gasped in astonishment at the scene confronting him.

The figure of the small man wearing a broad brimmed hat, who had haunted his dreams all these days, sat at the end of the stone bridge, with a difference—he was now facing him! Thin fingers clasped his knees as he sat hunched forward.

In the dazed state of mind that he was in, all Roshan could make out

was that the face in the shadows was neither smiling nor scowling in disapproval. It was serene. Only the eyes shone brilliantly.

"I knew you would come, son," a deep, resonant voice whispered. "I wanted you to come here on your own. You realise now that we dislike anyone disturbing the natural set-up here. I came every night to you, to persuade you to return what was not yours. This place, remember, is for everyone to experience happiness and bliss...to learn much...remember...remember..." the voice trailed off and the figure too disappeared like a twirl of mist!

"I... ah... I..." Roshan stammered and stuttered. He wanted to apologise for his action to whoever it was who had been constantly watching him. Dazed with the eerie experience, he glanced back at the driftwood bobbing in the stream.

The face seemed to laugh merrily at him! Startled at its uncanny resemblance to his own face, Roshan began to run back through the woods. He never could remember later how he managed to climb up the slope

towards the stone dolmen. Clutching the stone for support and panting heavily with the strain, he stood for a while to steady his racing heart.

Calming down, Roshan realised to his surprise that he had not felt any dread or terror during the encounter with the strange spirit. It was only a feeling of shame he had felt—like a child being admonished gently by a father for a mistake.

He looked at the serene woods below and whispered, "Yes, I understand now. I loved being there in your midst... I would love to come again sometime soon...thank you for the experience..."

Was it his imagination or did he really see a small figure with a broad brimmed hat standing

under the shade of the trees raising a hand in farewell?

After lunch, Roshan bade farewell to Kong Bina and Willie and left with Mr. Dutta in his car. As they drove along, Roshan hardly listened to Mr. Dutta's friendly chatter about the lovely land where he had decided to spend the rest of his life. Only one question nagged Roshan's mind—how had Mr. Dutta's face come to be imprinted on the driftwood? He had to find out.

"Sorry to interrupt you, Sir. Please tell me," Roshan paused and plunged on, "what do you think of the Enchanted Forest, the Sacred Grove, and the beliefs of the local folk about it."

Mr. Dutta remained silent, looking out of the

car window at the scenery rushing past. Then he spoke softly.

"Yes," he said, "they do have quaint beliefs. I found out nearly a decade ago when I first visited the Enchanted Forest. I now respect and revere their age-old beliefs. No doubt about it." He shook his head slowly, "There seems to be a strong power guarding the Sacred Grove..." his voice trailed off into a whisper.

Roshan now knew his answer. 'Mr. Dutta too, must have had a similar experience which left his imprint on the driftwood and...' He was filled with a chilling thought—now his face, imprinted on the driftwood, would remain as evidence of his misconduct, until someone else picked it up...



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Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the *Children's World* Pen-friends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have pen-friends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

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Taekwando
Japan, Korea

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Arunachal Pradesh, India
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Sector Corporation
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Any country

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U.S.A., Singapore

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Kargil 194 103
Jammu & Kashmir, India
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Pen-friends
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Any country

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Roll No. 2888
Nehru House
Sainik School
P.O. Kazhakootom
Trivandrum 695 585
Kerala, India
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Any country

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Raj Nagar
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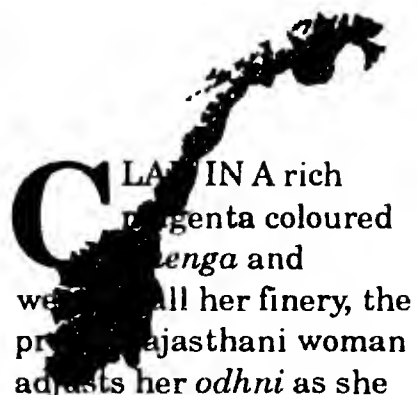
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| 8362
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Orissa, India
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China, Japan |
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Japan, U.K. | 8370
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India
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Any country | 8375
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music
Any country |
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2124 Dhobiwara | 8371
C. Manikandan (15)
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R.D. Layout
Lakkassandra
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India | 8387
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U.S.A., Canada |
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Any country | 8388
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Any country |
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India | 8384
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swimming
Any country | 8389
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France, U.S.A. |
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India
Stamps, badminton
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U.S.A., Australia | 8390
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U.S.A., Canada |
| 8380
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Chess, reading
Any country | 8386
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Stamps and currency,
coins
Any country | 8391
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c/o Murlidhar Rao Patil
P.O. Abbendha
Tq. Narayankhed
Dist. Medak
Andhra Pradesh 502 286
India
Collecting photographs
U.S.A., U.K. |
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Texas 77381, U.S.A.
Reading, basketball
India | | |

to norway from

dolls museum india



CLASS IN A rich
vibrant, multi-coloured
lehenga and
wedding all her finery, the
princess Rajasthani woman
adjusts her *odhni* as she
accompanies her
handsome Rajput husband
and their two excited
children to the *mela*.

In truth, this happy-as-a-picture family was *not* merely on its way to the *mela*—but on a long journey abroad. They are permanent representatives of India in Norway, at the International Museum of Children's Art, in Oslo.

It is befitting that these life-size dolls (Man 65", Woman 61", Boy 45" and Girl 38") were crafted at the Dolls Workshop attached to the Shankar's International Dolls Museum. The Workshop has, for the last 18 years, been making Indian dolls in authentic Indian costumes for exchange purposes with other countries. Many of the

series made by the Workshop so far i.e. the Man-Woman series from every Indian State and Union Territory, the Brides of India, the Kathakali pageant, are on permanent display in the Indian section of the Shankar's International Dolls Museum.

The making of these papier-mache dolls may have proved a gargantuan task for any but the most persistent and patient. The dedicated team of the Dolls Workshop worked long and hard to complete the task in record time. More daunting however was the prospect of ensuring that the fragile packages were lovingly transported to their destination, but the Scandinavian Airlines took care of that, and that too at no cost.

The Children's Museum at Oslo has a similar outlook to that of the

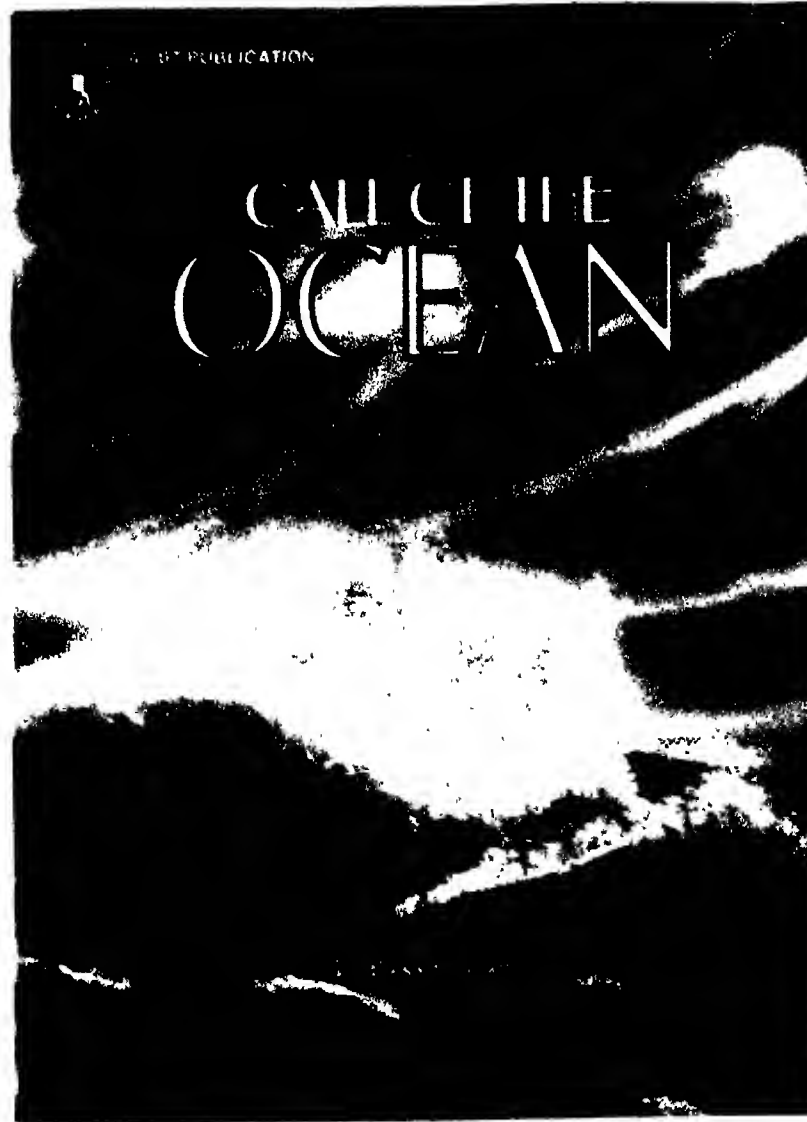
Children's Book Trust and Shankar's International Children's Competition. It promotes activities for and of children and has on display paintings, dolls, musical instruments and so on.

'The Indian family', the Director of the Museum Ms. Alla Goldin feels, nicely represents India for the local child visitors. It gives them a 'fair' idea of a happy Indian family, not too far removed from its rural Indian roots but not necessarily steeped in images of poverty or beggary. The two 'doll' children especially are images of sheer joy—the girl in her *leheria lehenga-choli-odhni* outfit and the boy in *churidar-kurta*, both bouncing with life. They would indeed go a long way in acquainting people with the Indian way of life, and put joy with an Indian fragrance into the heart of Norway and its children.



20.9.96

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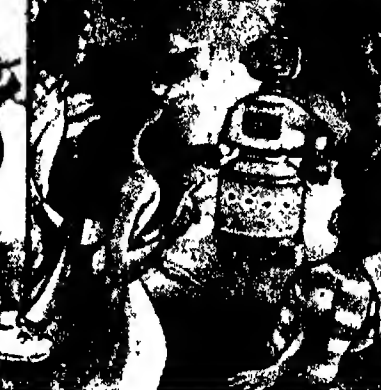
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COVER DESIGN
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Children's World 1996

Very
Happy
Diwali

...Dear Readers,

At one end of the scale is the parent who declares, "When my daughter says something is lousy, I know it is lousy, and when she says it is good, I know it must be..." In spite of several reservations, one cannot help admiring the parent for lending his child his ear, and actually 'hearing' what she says.

At the other end are those adults who are so earnest in their endeavour to "understand children" that they are "willing to come down to the level of the child". Such misplaced dedication and condescension! No wonder children do not seem to want it.

So what do children want nowadays? Does any child have *the* answer? Obviously not! Because then children would become boring and predictable like adults who want good, obedient children with good grades, and all other 'good' things in life.

But children have rights too. They do not seem to know all of them, so adults are setting about informing them. As a result collectively, we have a lot of grown-ups working for the enhancement of life for children.

As an inevitable part of this machinery, *Children's World* is at pains to impress upon others, that what children want or need, is often best expressed by children themselves. It is easy to become soul-weary and tongue-tired reiterating this point. When that happens, we have only one answer left, "Wait till the November issue of *Children's World* is out. Everything you ever wanted to know about what children think about can be found there."

We can proudly say that our stand has been more than justified. Sans the lollipop padding and chocolate wrapping, and yet with a lingering

sweetness of its own, you have given us reality like it is, imagination as one would like to have it, innocence, joy, disappointment, warning, yearning... it is all there in Your Pages, and do we feel proud being a part of it all!

Congratulations all of you! Were it not for each one of the entries, Your Pages could not have brought out the added sparkle to this festive season.

Kudos to the prize-winners!

Amrapali Hazra's first prize-winning article 'The Journey' tells a sordid tale of the plight of some children in independent India—especially girls.

Radhika Gupta, like our other Indian contributors from foreign lands, proves, through her second prize-winning poems, that wherever we are, the basic Indian instinct for freedom, equality and a fierce sense of pride in it shall never be cowed down.

We guarantee that after reading 'The Wonderful Lilliputians', **Kannal Achuthan's** third prize-winning article, you will never think of rain as wet, dull and boring ever again!

As for all the Highly Commended articles (we announced only three 'consolation' prizes, but have ended up giving seven), they indicate, like the other 33 selected articles, that all that is just, righteous and humane is of prime importance to children today. As a token of our appreciation to the overwhelming response to this year's Your Pages competition, we have a Roll of Honour, in which the names of all contributors appear, in random order.

Thank you, friends. The lights of Diwali are sure to burn more brightly for you this year. It is the warm glow of 'humaneness' within however that makes all the difference.

Happy Diwali, happy celebrating and happier reading hours,

Editor

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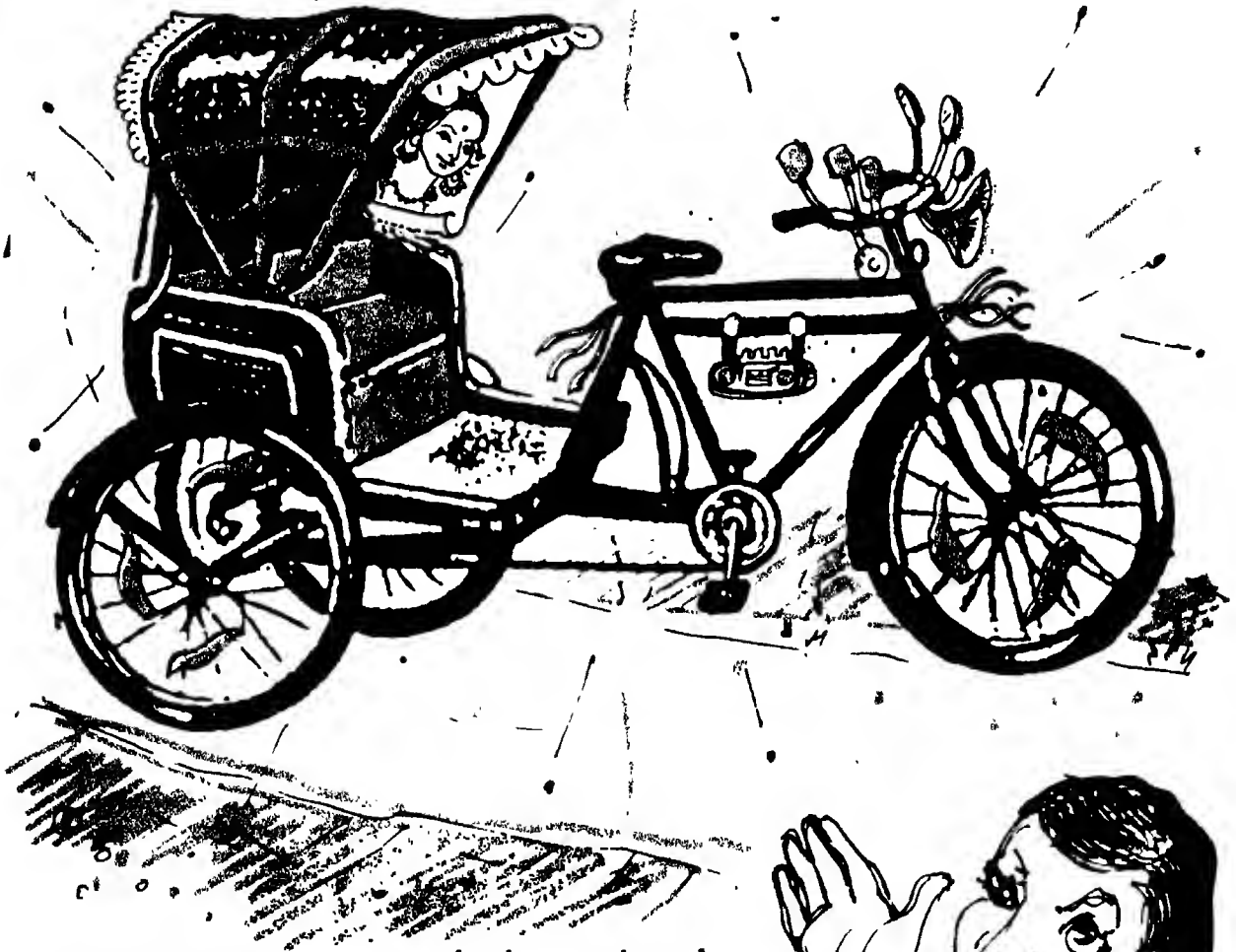
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HIGHLY
COMMENDED

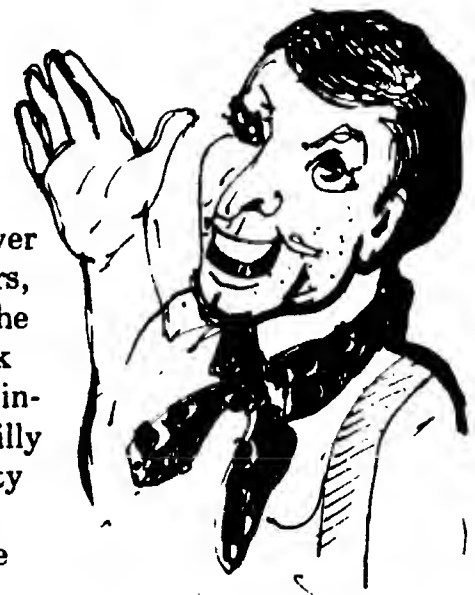
The Rickshaw That Did Not Have....?



Story: Prachi
Chaturvedi (14),
Cholthram School,
Indore
Illustrations:
Ajanta Guhathakurta

SURESH'S rickshaw was the talk of the city, with shining

wheels, tassels and streamers strung all over it! Six rear-view mirrors, two horns, a bell and the two pedals made it look dignified. It had a two-in-one music system. A frilly sunshade made it pretty and a smiling Sridevi poster accompanied the passenger to his destination.





Swerve, swing, swish, screech Miss Rickshaw went, through narrow lanes with her horns honking and music blaring. "Arre kya gaddi

hai..." anyone who saw it would gasp!

Each one who rode in it was proud to do so and Suresh was praised all around.

One day, Suresh called out to his friends, "Believe it or not, my rick lacks just one thing! Can anyone guess what it is?" He promised a hundred rupees for the right guess.

"Hmm... a bell?" said Mr. Jalebiwallah.

"Wrong!" yelled Suresh and went off a hundred rupees richer.

The next day Mr. Kulfiwallah felt it lacked a tarpaulin for the rains but Suresh fished out a long length of polythene and bagged another one hundred rupees!

Nearly everyday, someone would try his hand at guessing. But every single time they were wrong. Till the day, Suresh went zipping downhill and a stubborn cow suddenly crossed his path... CRASH... went the rick and not a single part was to be found.

"Arre, Suresh, why didn't you brake...?" a huge crowd questioned.

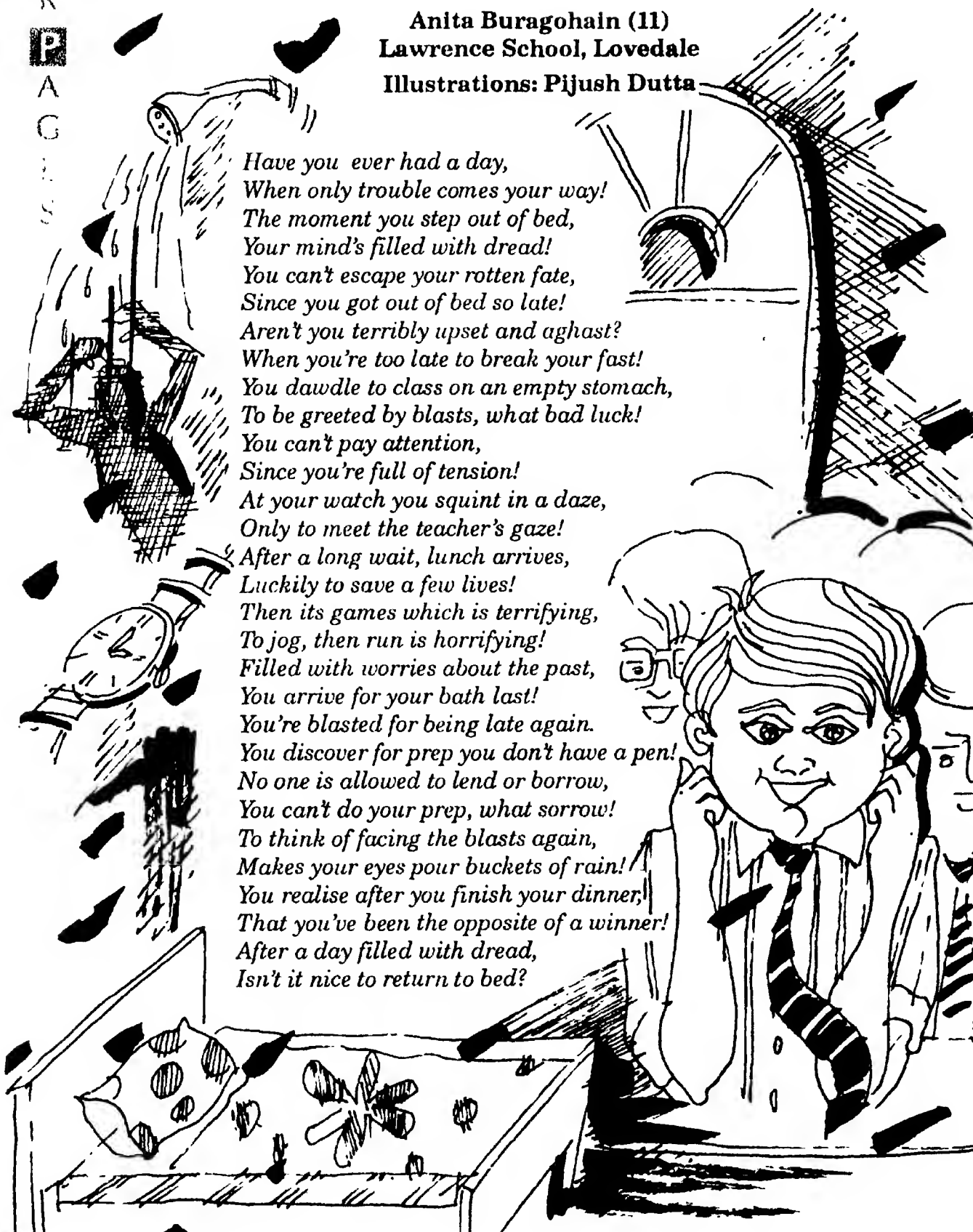
Wincing with pain, Suresh answered, "Now you know what my rickshaw lacks...?"

The brakes!

LATE FATE

Anita Buragohain (11)
Lawrence School, Lovedale
Illustrations: Pijush Dutta

Have you ever had a day,
When only trouble comes your way!
The moment you step out of bed,
Your mind's filled with dread!
You can't escape your rotten fate,
Since you got out of bed so late!
Aren't you terribly upset and aghast?
When you're too late to break your fast!
You dawdle to class on an empty stomach,
To be greeted by blasts, what bad luck!
You can't pay attention,
Since you're full of tension!
At your watch you squint in a daze,
Only to meet the teacher's gaze!
After a long wait, lunch arrives,
Luckily to save a few lives!
Then its games which is terrifying,
To jog, then run is horrifying!
Filled with worries about the past,
You arrive for your bath last!
You're blasted for being late again.
You discover for prep you don't have a pen!
No one is allowed to lend or borrow,
You can't do your prep, what sorrow!
To think of facing the blasts again,
Makes your eyes pour buckets of rain!
You realise after you finish your dinner,
That you've been the opposite of a winner!
After a day filled with dread,
Isn't it nice to return to bed?



The Strange 'THING'

P. Vijayalakshmi (16)

D.T.E.A. Senior Secondary School,
Mandir Marg, New Delhi

Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterjee

*As I walked on the road
With the school bag's heavy load
I saw a very strange 'thing'.
I bent and picked it up
It was painted black and white
Which suited it all right.
It was made of wood
I thought it would do me some good.
I found a paper inside
I was very eager to read it
It said, "You can use this as a magic tool"
On turning the paper I saw
Another message—"April Fool".
What a joke somebody played on me!
A happy moment somebody gave me
I threw the 'thing' away
And continued walking on my way.*



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SUMMER

Kalyani Ganapathy (12)

Lawrence School, Ootacamund

Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterjee

*Hurray! it is summer, boys
Do come out with your toys;
It means no more school
So you can play the fool;
With no one to teach
While you play on the beach
No more snow
Nor more coats
No more blizzards
Caused by wretched wizards!
The weather is cool
Pleasant enough to wade in the pool
Lots of ice-cream
And dessert with cream
Enjoy the summer!
Enjoy the summer!*



HIGHLY
COMMENDED

Y Story: Abhijeet Pathak (16)
O Choithram School, Indore
U
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P Illustrations: Becjee

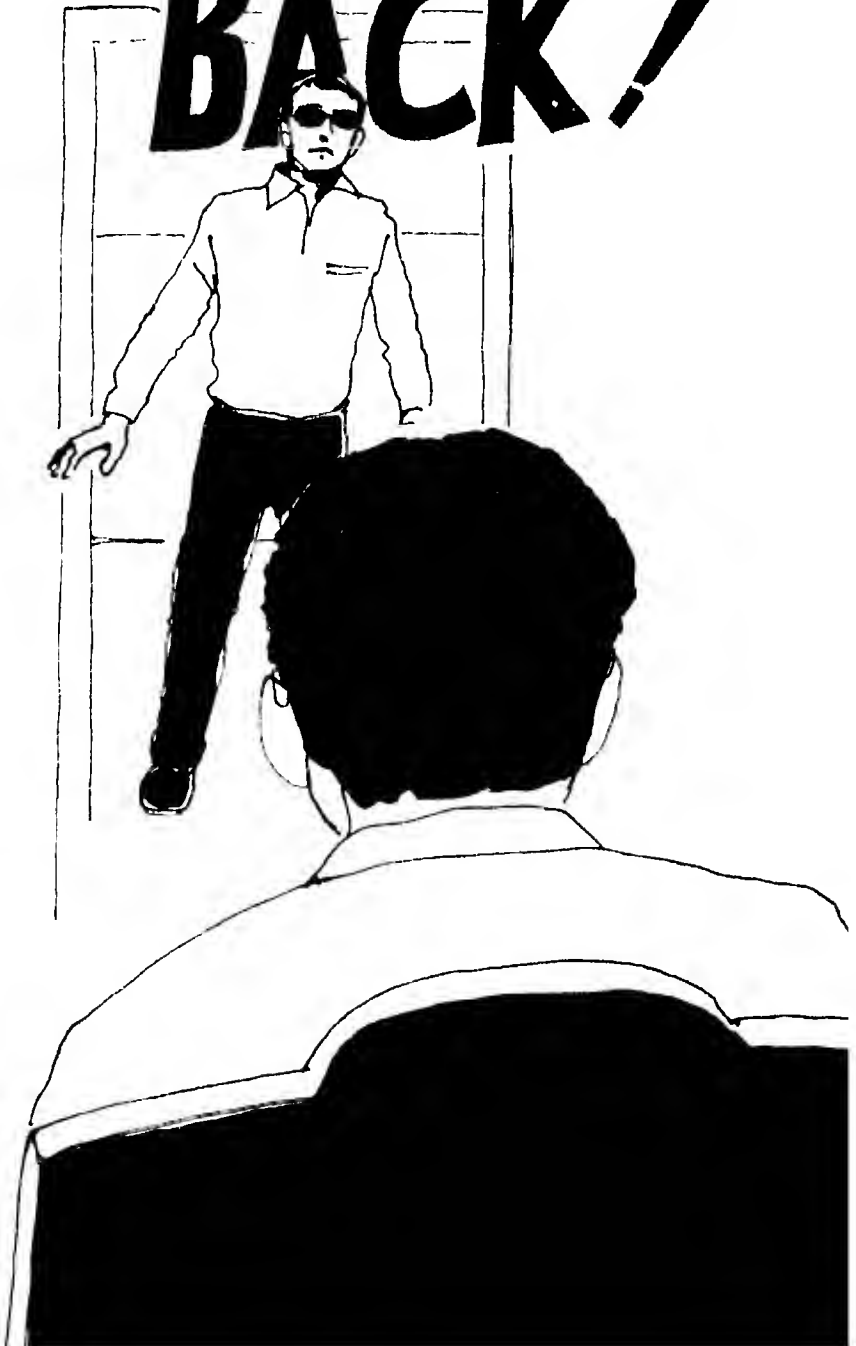
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IT was a cold, winter, Friday evening. One could have called it night, as it had become dark outside. It was snowing hard and a blizzard was hammering on the glass door of my clinic, which read: "Dr. Richard Hallmark, D.M.S.—Orthonerval Surgery, Specialization—Implantation and Design".

I had no more appointments for the day and was preparing to go home. I was looking forward to a calm, restful weekend when suddenly the door to my clinic opened with a gust of cold, icy wind and a tall, well-built person entered, slamming the door behind him. I was taken aback by his sudden and violent appearance, and to calm my nerves I said, sternly, "Is that the way to enter a clinic, Mister? What do you want? Do you have an appointment? I don't see patients this late."

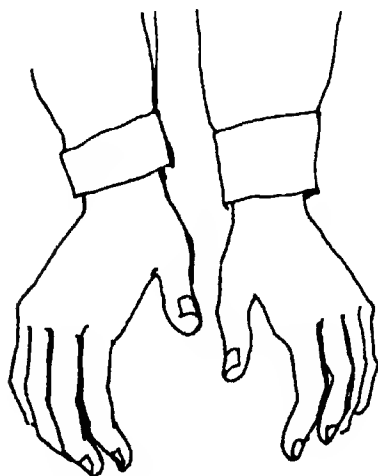
Contrary to my first impression, the person turned out to be a polite,

DR. PATHAK, You Will BE BACK!



well-mannered gentleman who apologised for coming without an appointment. He said that he had no choice but to come to me as he thought only I could solve his problem. I told him that he could see me after the weekend but he was persistent. He said no one else could cure him, that he was willing to pay anything for the inconvenience caused.

Meanwhile, I had noticed his problem. His finger joints were jammed. On closer examination I found that there was no pain, nor swelling, not even numbness, yet the joints had failed. The person told me that he had the joints implanted a few years ago. There were no marks of surgery on his fingers or hand. Whoever had operated on him, was an expert.



The curious nature of his problem compelled me to take up his case. Finally after some check-ups I decided to implant a new set of joints in his fingers, replacing the old ones. I took out a set of artificial joints made of the alloy 'Referixium', the lightest, toughest and most elastic solid presently known to man. These joints were



controlled nervo-electrically by impulses of the nerves. Replacing joints had become a ten-minute job, ever since the technique of 'Cryo-Surgery' on Osteocytes had been perfected five years ago, in 2001. It was now child's play.

My patient, after being treated, paid me handsomely, thanked me profusely and looked

happy with my work. After he had left, I was cleaning the operating room when the discarded set of joints suddenly caught my attention. They were very different from what I used. They were lighter, almost weightless, tougher and more elastic than the joints I knew of. It was strange that joints of such quality should malfunction. The complexity of design told me that these were the creations of a genius. But whose? I had seen the surgical techniques of all top surgeons like Dr. Patrick, Dr. Yamaguchi, Dr. Datwouski, but none of them could make joints like the ones I now held. And, at this point, speaking of geniuses, my mind drifted to memories of Dr. Arun Pathak.

Dr. Arun Pathak had been a genius beyond compare, a Nobel Laureate. He had numerous 'firsts' to his credit. He was the best Orthoneuro surgeon and designer that the world had ever produced. Only he could have done such a job. But that was impossible, for Dr. Pathak had disappeared many years ago, and was presumed killed in a crash. The body had not

YOU have been found and the cause of the crash was still unknown. Nevertheless, it was generally believed that Dr. Pathak was no more.

PATHAK I did not feel like going home now, and I started studying the joints carefully under my 'Tachyon Flow Oscilloscope'. It revealed that the joints were hollow and the chemical structure of the material was unknown. I was struck by the fact that someone other than Dr. Pathak could do such a marvellous job.

Studying the 'Cenovial layers', I suddenly spotted something, probably an impurity of some kind in the material. But an impurity was not what I expected in a product of such quality material and craftsmanship. I isolated the impurity and with a 'Maser-guided optic cable', probed for impurities. It was a hard but flexible, cylindrical object.

When I tapped it a few times, it fell open. I saw that it was a 'nano-film' rather, a 'nano-scripted' minute letter. I was able to read it under my 'Tachyon Flow Oscilloscope' at magnification 'Level-32'. It read: "Dr. Richard, you

are my only hope; that is, if this letter reaches you. I am right now in 'Gama-Tryax-4', a plane in the uncharted quadrant of Andromeda. I was kidnapped, while flying from Bombay to London, by aliens who caused the crash. They don't like shoddy work so I cannot send you any more letters. They want to invade our earth not by force, but slowly and gradually, acquiring the power positions on earth. They look similar to humans. They only have one handicap and that is the absence of any kind of digits or fingers. This is why I was kidnapped. To fit them with fingers.

These malfunctioning joints were my attempt to contact you as these people prefer to go to the best man, who in this case is you, on earth. Your patient was one of these people and you will receive some more patients so that you can contact me in the same way, as they keep rotating their force.

Yours truly,

A. Pathak

I read the letter thrice. I was restless for many days following the letter. I had a mission to accomplish now.

I met the President,

who was one of my patients, and told him about Dr. Pathak's letter. He in turn talked to the heads of other superpowers. Dr. Pathak was an internationally renowned figure. It did not take much time to finalise the strategy...

That was a year ago. In this short period we have succeeded in disrupting their plans. We screened everyone with the kind of joints which I had replaced, we captured a few aliens, interrogated them, even managed to place our person inside their circle. They don't know anything yet, but they soon will because in one of their spaceships, which they use to rotate their force, will be our specially trained force. As it heads back to their planet, it will be followed by our spaceships. The wait will then finally be over. There is still one thing left for me to do in this mission and I am well prepared for it.

Today, my replacement cabinet is full, with many new sets of finger joints, waiting for their alien recipients. All of them have a seven-word message concealed in them which reads: "Dr. Pathak, you will be back!"

MY FIRST DREAM

Geetha Ramaswami (12)
N.K. Bhagrodia Public School, Delhi
Illustration: Chaitali Chatterjee

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*I had my first dream,
When I was just three.
It was the silliest dream,
I could ever see.
An emperor carrying a horse,
The empress sitting on it!
The minister running at the back,
Loaded with eggs in a sack!
A donkey chasing a flea,
Who was ready to fly!
The frogs jumped to and fro,
And one of them swallowed a crow!
Two birds sat twittering together,
Plucking each other's feathers!
Then I saw a drama on the screen,
I saw Luv-Kush eating ice-cream!
I went on stage, and snatched one,
But then before my eyes, I saw my Mum!
I realised it was just a dream—
The funniest dream I have ever seen!*





Story: Vinod Jayakumar (15)
Sainik School, Kerala
Illustrations: Beejee

‘REPRODUCTION... amoeba... oxygen... photosynthesis... weeding... seeding...” the Biology class was in progress. My Biology teacher seemed like an ‘enchantress’ to me for her words sent sleep

waves through the class. I was free from her spell because I did not pay attention to any of her words.

As I was whiling away the time of her double period thus, I caught sight of a peculiar insect. It was the size of a

mosquito. The body of the creature was a glowing green. It landed on my arm and stung me. Let it drink awhile, I thought, being a peace-loving person. Suddenly, I noticed that the green colour in the insect’s body was actually a liquid which it was injecting into my body.

I felt helpless, as if someone had bound my arms. The entire green liquid in the insect’s body it injected into me and the creature vanished into thin air. I fainted. When I regained my senses, I was at home. My mother told me that I had slept for nearly seventeen hours which the doctor said was strange.

Next morning, I woke up feeling energetic. Walking out of the house, I caught hold of the knob to close the door behind me. To my utter surprise the knob came away in my hand.

A bit confused I left for school a little later. The school bus in which I travelled was a rickety old one and looked ready to collapse any moment. On the way to school, we noticed another of our ‘superfast’ buses parked by the side of the road. Its driver stopped our bus

and asked us to lend a hand to push the bus.

We got down.

Uninterested, I stood aside. My friends began to push the bus inch by inch. When they were exhausted, shouting "Superman in action" I pushed the bus. It disappeared! Naturally, everybody was curious about what I had done.

During the games period, I was playing football. That day we had a match with another class. My playmates considered me a good scorer in the penalty stroke round. And I got a chance to prove myself. I was tense; my friends advised me to kick the ball lightly. I gave it a light kick. The ball flew right into the goalkeeper's hands, but the cheers grew as both the ball and the keeper went into the net. During the second half of the match, I accidentally kicked the ball upwards and it never came back.

By the end of the day I had earned the name of 'Demolition Man'. When I played basketball, I broke the board; the whole switchboard collapsed when I tried to switch on the fan; when I rested my back against a banyan tree, the huge tree fell.

These small incidents did not miss the public eye. Journalists came to interview me. I was photographed. Many companies and producers even made me sign contracts for their advertisements and films.

After an exotic and eventful day, when I turned on the TV, the newsreader reported that a strange object, the size of a football, had been sighted in space. I turned out the lights and went to bed. Yes, it was unmistakably the same creature. It had returned to take back my power. It

started sucking out the green liquid, but it soon began drawing my blood too. I shouted, "Leave me alone, you nasty creature. Let me live. Get away. Please, let me live!" The creature's vicious sting hurt and I winced. I gathered the strength to fight back and slowly opened my eyes.

Was it a miracle? There was no evil creature in front of me, only my Biology teacher pinching me for sleeping. The whole class was roaring with laughter and even my teacher joined them. At last I too had fallen under her spell.



FANNY'S TEDDY BEAR



**Story: Purnima G. (10),
Padma Seshadri
Bal Bhavan Sr. Sec.
School, Madras
Illustrations:
Ajanta Guhathakurta**

TOYLAND was a place which Santa Claus visited every year to pick up gifts for the children of the world. Toys of all varieties, and characters we come across in comic books and fairy tales lived there.

The three bears, whom Goldilocks once met, also lived there. Mama Bear had given birth to another little bear. The elder child was now longing to get out of Toyland and see the world.

Just before Christmas Santa visited Toyland to select toys for the good children of the world. Little Bear offered to go with Santa. Santa took him readily along with some other toys in a sack. Off they went in the reindeer sledge singing 'Jingle Bells...'

Santa always got to know what children

wanted for Christmas through their dreams. He put Little Bear in the stocking of a girl called Fanny who had always longed for a cuddly bear. Fanny was really thrilled about the gift from Santa Claus. She kept him with all the other toys in the cupboard. She showered him with love and affection. Little Bear also liked her and decided to help her in whatever way he could.

One night a thief tried to reach for Fanny's piggy bank through the window. Little Bear, who had seen Fanny drop coins into the piggy bank, understood



the page of the notebook. Then he coloured his face, eyes, mouth and ears and pressed his face to the page. It resulted in a lifelike picture of a teddy bear.

Fanny was surprised to see the drawing. She thought just like she had read in her story-books, she had a Fairy Godmother. That *her* Fairy Godmother must have been pleased with her behaviour and must have done the drawing as a reward. When she submitted it to her art teacher, she was given a good grade.

Fanny's grandmother lived abroad. One day

Fanny's family received a phone call about Granny's visit. The night before Granny's visit, Fanny's mother told her that she would be going to the airport early the next morning to receive Granny. It was Fanny's duty to pick flowers from the garden and arrange them in vases to welcome Granny.

That night Fanny worked late on her lessons. She could not wake up early in the morning as her mother wanted. The Little Bear's heart went out to the little girl who was sleeping soundly. He decided to help her. He

the thief's intention. He at once pushed down all his companions from the cupboard. That caused a commotion and the thief ran away fearing that the people in the house would wake up.

One day Fanny had to make a drawing in her art book. Unable to decide what to draw, she left her art book open and went to the terrace to read one of her favourite fairy tales. Little Bear wanted to help her out. When he saw the wet paint in the palette, an idea struck him. He painted his back a brown colour and pressed himself against





went into the garden, plucked flowers and arranged them in vases. Fanny, who woke up late, was sure she would get a scolding from her mother. To her surprise, her mother thanked her for the beautiful flower arrangements.

Fanny again thought it was the work of her Fairy Godmother. Little Bear was not sorry that Fanny did not know about his having helped her. All that he cared for was that his little friend Fanny was happy.

All his good deeds, however, came to the notice of Santa Claus. The next Christmas he brought the Little Bear a gift—a potful of honey.

CHILD LABOUR

Jasmine Kaur Kharbanda (12)
Guru Harkrishan Public School
New Delhi

Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterjee

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*Childhood is a tender age
To be loved, not to be in a cage,
To play, sing and run
Be mischievous for fun
And to learn and write with little fingers
But not to let them burn.
Those who force a child to labour
In factories, mines, farms or by a neighbour
Invite God's curse and human wrath
For practising bondage and treading a cruel path.
If one truly wants His grace
Let children wear a happy face.
A child is the incarnation of God
Do not abuse him, or use the rod
Give him affection and be polite
For love and freedom is his right
I, rather, beseech all to love a child
To love a child is to love the Lord.*



Coming of Age

Story: Harish K.S. (15)
Cholthram School,
Indore

Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

THEY ran hard and fast. It was the sporting festival of the century. The year 2000 Olympics at Sydney. They had both got a superb start off the blocks. Forget the competition. This was going to be a one-to-one battle. They approached the 250 metres mark. They were still running neck and neck.

From the time Oliver had emerged as a star, comparisons with Delaitre, the 'running machine', had been inevitable. They had been room-mates in the army and surprisingly—even shockingly—Oliver hardly ever showed any spirit of camaraderie. In all the races he lost, all the times he was wrong—and he was a sore loser—one would never see him go up to the winner and shake hands. People had

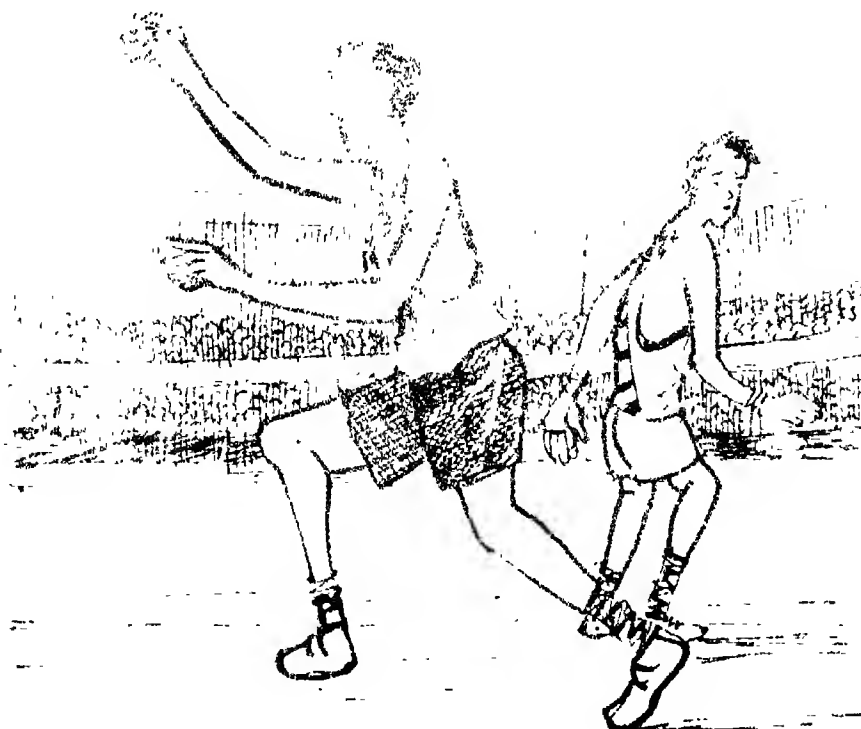
got used to his lack of good manners. I continued to watch this titanic struggle on my television set.

They now approached the finish line. They had covered 350 metres, with nothing to separate them. The 'running machine' vs 'the unfriendly monster' showdown was coming to an end, and one almost willed Oliver to lose.

And so it happened! In the final 20 metres Delaitre pulled away and

finished about a metre ahead. The crowd began to sense an explosion. Oliver would run off into the distance—refusing as always to congratulate the winner. The spectators began clearing their throats. They wanted to 'boo' him off the tracks.

After a long time... a very long time... Oliver rose. He walked towards Delaitre with a grim expression. He looked as if he would kill him. For a



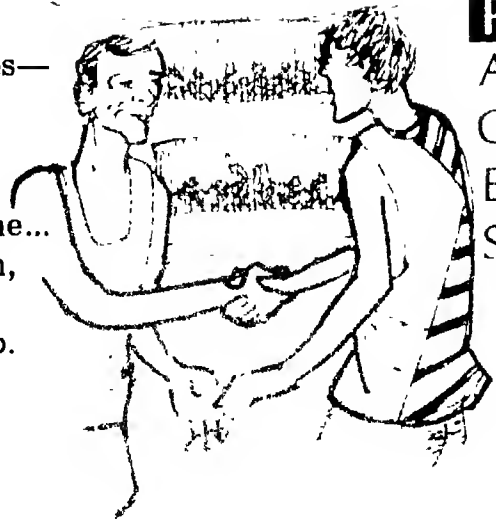
moment, the crowd held its collective breath. He held out his hand and shook hands with Delaitre and said what he had never, ever said in his 26 years of life, "You were great, man!"

Oliver almost choked there. All these years, defeat had meant embarrassment to him. Now, it meant disappointment. He was too stunned to throw a tantrum. He just stood there, hands on hips, looking distant and lost.

And then, he smiled; he smiled in defeat and waved to the crowd. Instantaneously, they roared. He got the applause even a victor would not get.

I was reminded of Rudyard Kipling's lines—
'If you can meet with triumph and disaster;
and treat these two impostors just the same...
then you will be a man,
my son!'

Oliver had grown up.
I could tell.
He was now a man.



WHY GOD MADE FRIENDS?

Amit Ghorawat (12)
Choithram School, Indore

*God in his wisdom made a friend
Someone on whom we can depend
A loyal friend who would understand,
And always lend a helping hand,
He felt we would need someone who
Could comfort us when we had the blues
Whose special warmth and happy smile
Would make us feel that life's worthwhile,
Someone with whom to take a walk
Share a book or have a talk,
Who'd chat for hours on the phone
Or sense our need to be alone.
In short, God made a friend to be
Someone we're always glad to see
There's little else that God can send
That means as much as one good friend.*





When I Am Alone

Radhika Joneja (15)
Delhi Public School, Hardwar

Illustrations: Nilabho

When the lights are out
And my mother is *not at home*,
I sit on a chair,
Thinking what might happen
If a ghost came.
Half afraid,
I sit quietly in a corner
With my eyes closed and my heart
Beating fast.
I wonder what might happen
If a ghost really came
To eat me like a sandwich or a sweet dish,
Or crunch me like potato chips
Or bake me in an oven like a cake.
Then I try to console myself
That all ghosts are not the same.
Let me hope for the best—
That the ghost will also be the best.



LIFE

Radhika Joneja (15)
Delhi Public School, Hardwar

Life is a flower.
Let it bloom,
Every day, every night.
Once the petals fall,
They can't be put back.
Life is a smile in tears
The smile is one thing
Which is always yours
Do not lose it
Once gone,
It may never return.
Life is a tree
Water it with love
Water it with care
You will get the fruit
Sweet, juicy fruit.
Life is a song.
The voice is yours.
If you do not sing
It is your fault
Life is life.
You have to take the dew,
You have to take the dryness
Joys and sorrow go together
In a way, that's life.

A CB Publication

NOVEMBER 1971

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CHILDREN'S WORLD



THE JOURNEY



WAITING FOR THE RAIN



WHAT IS THE EARTH



WE WONDERED
LILLIPUTIANS

SCHOOL

LOVE



YOUR
PAGES





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CHILDREN'S WORLD

NOVEMBER



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COVER DESIGN
PIJUSH DUTTA

Children's World 1996

A
Very
Happy
Diwali

...Dear Readers,

At one end of the scale is the parent who declares, "When my daughter says something is lousy, I know it is lousy, and when she says it is good, I know it must be..." In spite of several reservations, one cannot help admiring the parent for lending his child his ear, and actually 'hearing' what she says.

At the other end are those adults who are so earnest in their endeavour to "understand children" that they are "willing to come down to the level of the child". Such misplaced dedication and condescension! No wonder children do not seem to want it.

So what do children want nowadays? Does any child have *the* answer? Obviously not! Because then children would become boring and predictable like adults who want good, obedient children with good grades, and all other 'good' things in life.

But children have rights too. They do not seem to know all of them, so adults are setting about informing them. As a result collectively, we have a lot of grown-ups working for the enhancement of life for children.

As an inevitable part of this machinery, *Children's World* is at pains to impress upon others, that what children want or need, is often best expressed by children themselves. It is easy to become soul-weary and tongue-tired reiterating this point. When that happens, we have only one answer left, "Wait till the November issue of *Children's World* is out. Everything you ever wanted to know about what children think about can be found there."

We can proudly say that our stand has been more than justified. Sans the lollipop padding and chocolate wrapping, and yet with a lingering

sweetness of its own, you have given us reality like it is, imagination as one would like to have it, innocence, joy, disappointment, warning, yearning... it is all there in Your Pages, and do we feel proud being a part of it all!

Congratulations all of you! Were it not for each one of the entries, Your Pages could not have brought out the added sparkle to this festive season.

Kudos to the prize-winners!

Amrapali Hazra's first prize-winning article 'The Journey' tells a sordid tale of the plight of some children in independent India—especially girls.

Radhika Gupta, like our other Indian contributors from foreign lands, proves, through her second prize-winning poems, that wherever we are, the basic Indian instinct for freedom, equality and a fierce sense of pride in it shall never be cowed down.

We guarantee that after reading 'The Wonderful Lilliputians', **Kannal Achuthan's** third prize-winning article, you will never think of rain as wet, dull and boring ever again!

As for all the Highly Commended articles (we announced only three 'consolation' prizes, but have ended up giving seven), they indicate, like the other 33 selected articles, that all that is just, righteous and humane is of prime importance to children today. As a token of our appreciation to the overwhelming response to this year's Your Pages competition, we have a Roll of Honour, in which the names of all contributors appear, in random order.

Thank you, friends. The lights of Diwali are sure to burn more brightly for you this year. It is the warm glow of 'humaneness' within however that makes all the difference.

Happy Diwali, happy celebrating and happier reading hours,

Editor

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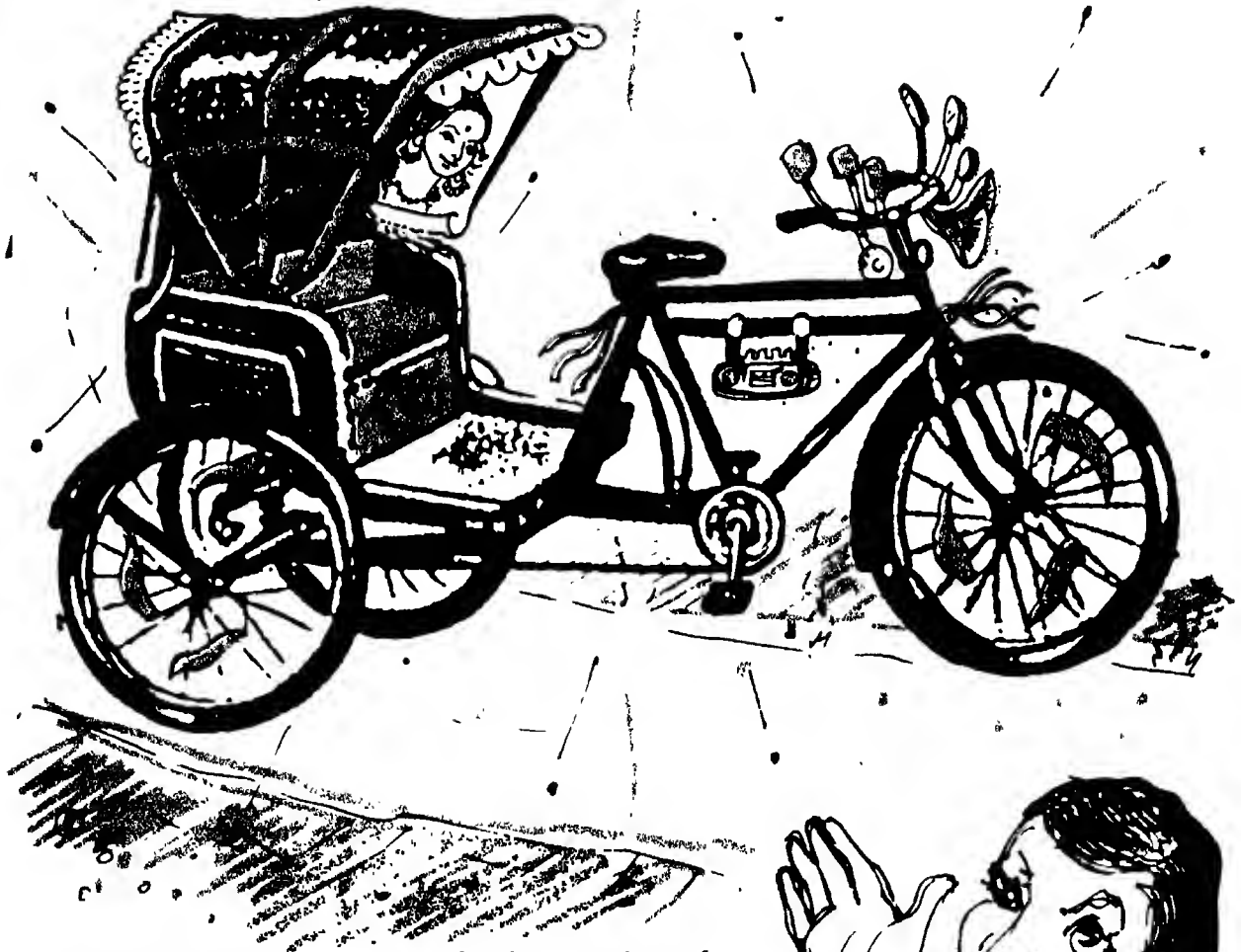
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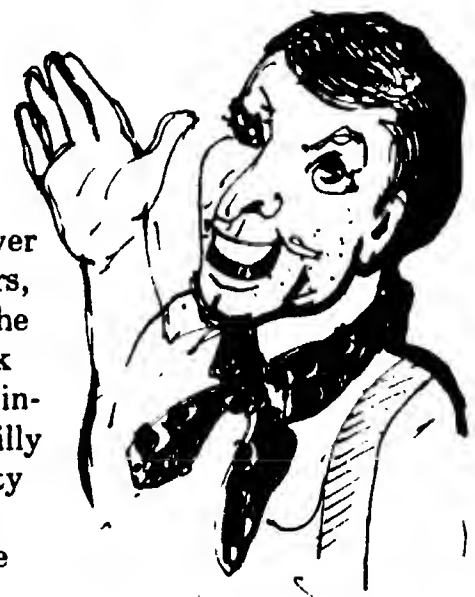
The Rickshaw That Did Not Have....?



Story: Prachi
Chaturvedi (14),
Cholthram School,
Indore
Illustrations:
Ajanta Guhathakurta

SURESH'S rickshaw was the talk of the city, with shining

wheels, tassels and streamers strung all over it! Six rear-view mirrors, two horns, a bell and the two pedals made it look dignified. It had a two-in-one music system. A frilly sunshade made it pretty and a smiling Sridevi poster accompanied the passenger to his destination.





hai..." anyone who saw it would gasp!

Each one who rode in it was proud to do so and Suresh was praised all around.

One day, Suresh called out to his friends, "Believe it or not, my rick lacks just one thing! Can anyone guess what it is?" He promised a hundred rupees for the right guess.

"Hmm... a bell?" said Mr. Jalebiwallah.

"Wrong!" yelled Suresh and went off a hundred rupees richer.

The next day Mr. Kulfiwallah felt it lacked a tarpaulin for the rains but Suresh fished out a long length of polythene and bagged another one hundred rupees!

Nearly everyday, someone would try his hand at guessing. But every single time they were wrong. Till the day, Suresh went zipping downhill and a stubborn cow suddenly crossed his path... CRASH... went the rick and not a single part was to be found.

"Arre, Suresh, why didn't you brake...?" a huge crowd questioned.

Wincing with pain, Suresh answered, "Now you know what my rickshaw lacks...?"

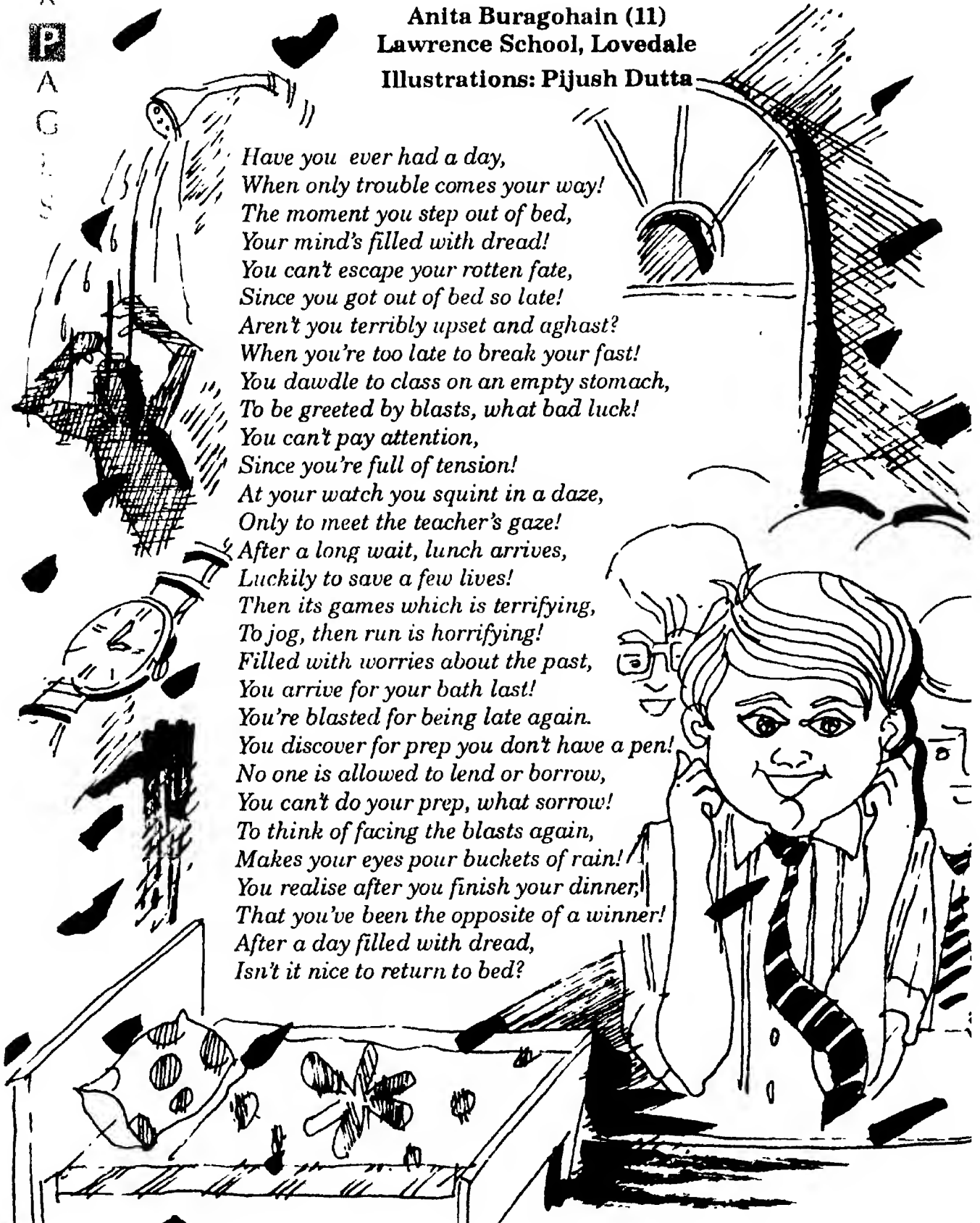
The brakes!

Swerve, swing, swish, screech Miss Rickshaw went, through narrow lanes with her horns honking and music blaring. "Arre kya gaddi

LATE FATE

Anita Buragohain (11)
Lawrence School, Lovedale
Illustrations: Pijush Dutta

Have you ever had a day,
When only trouble comes your way!
The moment you step out of bed,
Your mind's filled with dread!
You can't escape your rotten fate,
Since you got out of bed so late!
Aren't you terribly upset and aghast?
When you're too late to break your fast!
You dawdle to class on an empty stomach,
To be greeted by blasts, what bad luck!
You can't pay attention,
Since you're full of tension!
At your watch you squint in a daze,
Only to meet the teacher's gaze!
After a long wait, lunch arrives,
Luckily to save a few lives!
Then its games which is terrifying,
To jog, then run is horrifying!
Filled with worries about the past,
You arrive for your bath last!
You're blasted for being late again.
You discover for prep you don't have a pen!
No one is allowed to lend or borrow,
You can't do your prep, what sorrow!
To think of facing the blasts again,
Makes your eyes pour buckets of rain!
You realise after you finish your dinner,
That you've been the opposite of a winner!
After a day filled with dread,
Isn't it nice to return to bed?



The Strange 'THING'

P. Vijayalakshmi (16)

D.T.E.A. Senior Secondary School,
Mandir Marg, New Delhi

Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterjee

*As I walked on the road
With the school bag's heavy load
I saw a very strange 'thing'.
I bent and picked it up
It was painted black and white
Which suited it all right.
It was made of wood
I thought it would do me some good.
I found a paper inside
I was very eager to read it
It said, "You can use this as a magic tool"
On turning the paper I saw
Another message—"April Fool".
What a joke somebody played on me!
A happy moment somebody gave me
I threw the 'thing' away
And continued walking on my way.*



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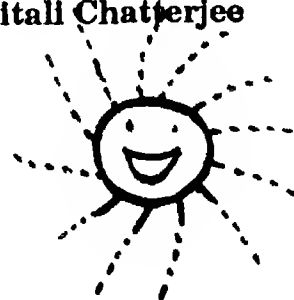
SUMMER

Kalyani Ganapathy (12)

Lawrence School, Ootacamund

Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterjee

*Hurray! it is summer, boys
Do come out with your toys;
It means no more school
So you can play the fool;
With no one to teach
While you play on the beach
No more snow
Nor more coats
No more blizzards
Caused by wretched wizards!
The weather is cool
Pleasant enough to wade in the pool
Lots of ice-cream
And dessert with cream
Enjoy the summer!
Enjoy the summer!*



HIGHLY
COMMENDED

Y Story: Abhijeet Pathak (16)
O Choithram School, Indore
U
R
P Illustrations: Becjee

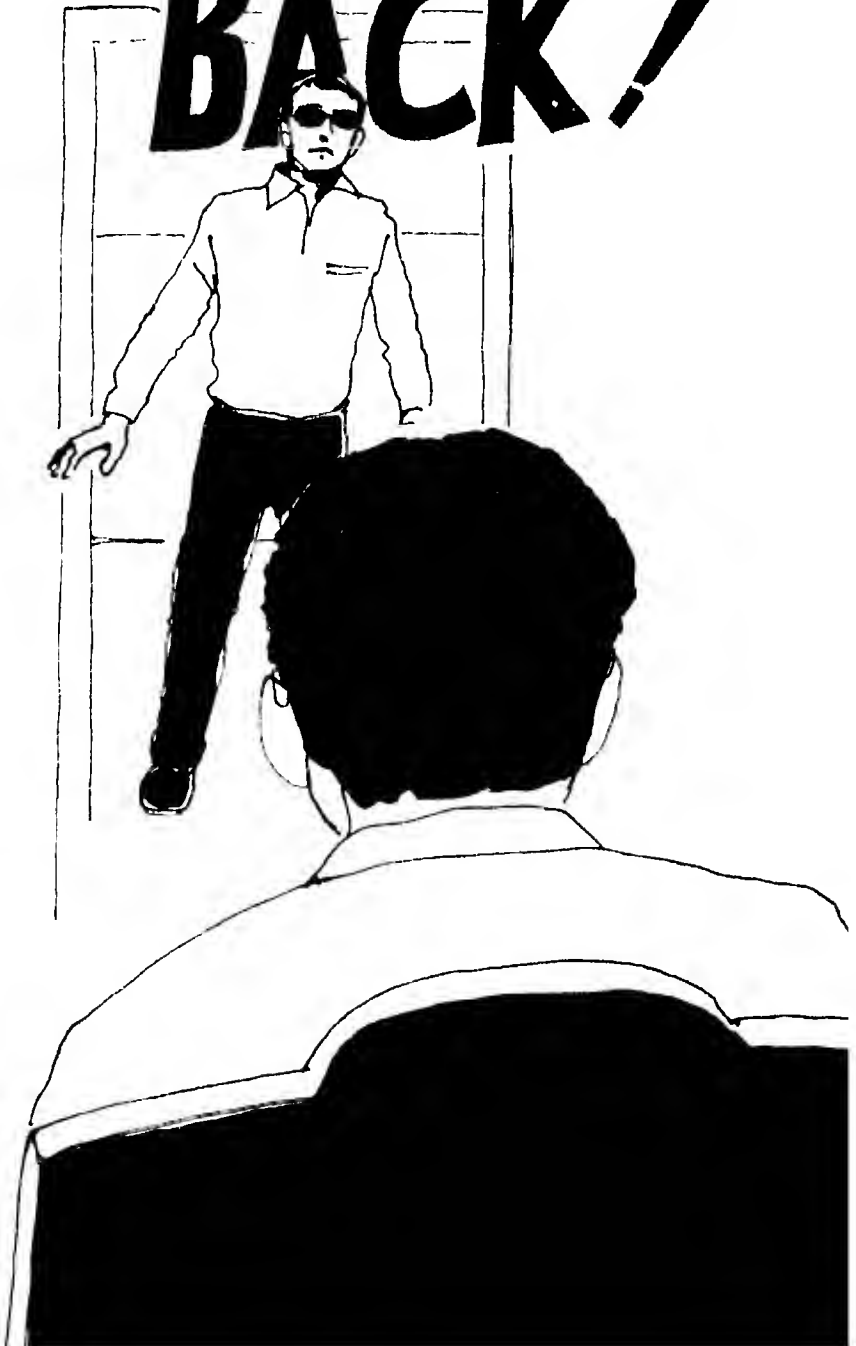
A
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IT was a cold, winter, Friday evening. One could have called it night, as it had become dark outside. It was snowing hard and a blizzard was hammering on the glass door of my clinic, which read: "Dr. Richard Hallmark, D.M.S.—Orthonerval Surgery, Specialization—Implantation and Design".

I had no more appointments for the day and was preparing to go home. I was looking forward to a calm, restful weekend when suddenly the door to my clinic opened with a gust of cold, icy wind and a tall, well-built person entered, slamming the door behind him. I was taken aback by his sudden and violent appearance, and to calm my nerves I said, sternly, "Is that the way to enter a clinic, Mister? What do you want? Do you have an appointment? I don't see patients this late."

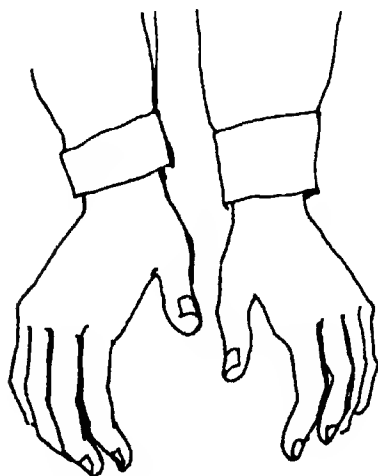
Contrary to my first impression, the person turned out to be a polite,

DR. PATHAK, You Will BE BACK!



well-mannered gentleman who apologised for coming without an appointment. He said that he had no choice but to come to me as he thought only I could solve his problem. I told him that he could see me after the weekend but he was persistent. He said no one else could cure him, that he was willing to pay anything for the inconvenience caused.

Meanwhile, I had noticed his problem. His finger joints were jammed. On closer examination I found that there was no pain, nor swelling, not even numbness, yet the joints had failed. The person told me that he had the joints implanted a few years ago. There were no marks of surgery on his fingers or hand. Whoever had operated on him, was an expert.



The curious nature of his problem compelled me to take up his case. Finally after some check-ups I decided to implant a new set of joints in his fingers, replacing the old ones. I took out a set of artificial joints made of the alloy 'Referixium', the lightest, toughest and most elastic solid presently known to man. These joints were



controlled nervo-electrically by impulses of the nerves. Replacing joints had become a ten-minute job, ever since the technique of 'Cryo-Surgery' on Osteocytes had been perfected five years ago, in 2001. It was now child's play.

My patient, after being treated, paid me handsomely, thanked me profusely and looked

happy with my work. After he had left, I was cleaning the operating room when the discarded set of joints suddenly caught my attention. They were very different from what I used. They were lighter, almost weightless, tougher and more elastic than the joints I knew of. It was strange that joints of such quality should malfunction. The complexity of design told me that these were the creations of a genius. But whose? I had seen the surgical techniques of all top surgeons like Dr. Patrick, Dr. Yamaguchi, Dr. Datwouski, but none of them could make joints like the ones I now held. And, at this point, speaking of geniuses, my mind drifted to memories of Dr. Arun Pathak.

Dr. Arun Pathak had been a genius beyond compare, a Nobel Laureate. He had numerous 'firsts' to his credit. He was the best Orthoneuro surgeon and designer that the world had ever produced. Only he could have done such a job. But that was impossible, for Dr. Pathak had disappeared many years ago, and was presumed killed in a crash. The body had not

Y been found and the cause of the crash was still unknown. Nevertheless, it was generally believed that Dr. Pathak was no more.

P I did not feel like going home now, and I started studying the joints carefully under my 'Tachyon Flow Oscilloscope'. It revealed that the joints were hollow and the chemical structure of the material was unknown. I was struck by the fact that someone other than Dr. Pathak could do such a marvellous job.

Studying the 'Cenovial layers', I suddenly spotted something, probably an impurity of some kind in the material. But an impurity was not what I expected in a product of such quality material and craftsmanship. I isolated the impurity and with a 'Maser-guided optic cable', probed for impurities. It was a hard but flexible, cylindrical object.

When I tapped it a few times, it fell open. I saw that it was a 'nano-film' rather, a 'nano-scripted' minute letter. I was able to read it under my 'Tachyon Flow Oscilloscope' at magnification 'Level-32'. It read: "Dr. Richard, you

are my only hope; that is, if this letter reaches you. I am right now in 'Gama-Tryax-4', a plane in the uncharted quadrant of Andromeda. I was kidnapped, while flying from Bombay to London, by aliens who caused the crash. They don't like shoddy work so I cannot send you any more letters. They want to invade our earth not by force, but slowly and gradually, acquiring the power positions on earth. They look similar to humans. They only have one handicap and that is the absence of any kind of digits or fingers. This is why I was kidnapped. To fit them with fingers.

These malfunctioning joints were my attempt to contact you as these people prefer to go to the best man, who in this case is you, on earth. Your patient was one of these people and you will receive some more patients so that you can contact me in the same way, as they keep rotating their force.

Yours truly,

A. Pathak

I read the letter thrice. I was restless for many days following the letter. I had a mission to accomplish now.

I met the President,

who was one of my patients, and told him about Dr. Pathak's letter. He in turn talked to the heads of other superpowers. Dr. Pathak was an internationally renowned figure. It did not take much time to finalise the strategy...

That was a year ago. In this short period we have succeeded in disrupting their plans. We screened everyone with the kind of joints which I had replaced, we captured a few aliens, interrogated them, even managed to place our person inside their circle. They don't know anything yet, but they soon will because in one of their spaceships, which they use to rotate their force, will be our specially trained force. As it heads back to their planet, it will be followed by our spaceships. The wait will then finally be over. There is still one thing left for me to do in this mission and I am well prepared for it.

Today, my replacement cabinet is full, with many new sets of finger joints, waiting for their alien recipients. All of them have a seven-word message concealed in them which reads: "Dr. Pathak, you will be back!"

MY FIRST DREAM

Geetha Ramaswami (12)
N.K. Bhagrodia Public School, Delhi
Illustration: Chaitali Chatterjee

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*I had my first dream,
When I was just three.
It was the silliest dream,
I could ever see.
An emperor carrying a horse,
The empress sitting on it!
The minister running at the back,
Loaded with eggs in a sack!
A donkey chasing a flea,
Who was ready to fly!
The frogs jumped to and fro,
And one of them swallowed a crow!
Two birds sat twittering together,
Plucking each other's feathers!
Then I saw a drama on the screen,
I saw Luv-Kush eating ice-cream!
I went on stage, and snatched one,
But then before my eyes, I saw my Mum!
I realised it was just a dream—
The funniest dream I have ever seen!*





Story: Vinod Jayakumar (15)
Sainik School, Kerala
Illustrations: Beejee

‘REPRODUCTION... amoeba... oxygen... photosynthesis... weeding... seeding...” the Biology class was in progress. My Biology teacher seemed like an ‘enchantress’ to me for her words sent sleep

waves through the class. I was free from her spell because I did not pay attention to any of her words.

As I was whiling away the time of her double period thus, I caught sight of a peculiar insect. It was the size of a

mosquito. The body of the creature was a glowing green. It landed on my arm and stung me. Let it drink awhile, I thought, being a peace-loving person. Suddenly, I noticed that the green colour in the insect’s body was actually a liquid which it was injecting into my body.

I felt helpless, as if someone had bound my arms. The entire green liquid in the insect’s body it injected into me and the creature vanished into thin air. I fainted. When I regained my senses, I was at home. My mother told me that I had slept for nearly seventeen hours which the doctor said was strange.

Next morning, I woke up feeling energetic. Walking out of the house, I caught hold of the knob to close the door behind me. To my utter surprise the knob came away in my hand.

A bit confused I left for school a little later. The school bus in which I travelled was a rickety old one and looked ready to collapse any moment. On the way to school, we noticed another of our ‘superfast’ buses parked by the side of the road. Its driver stopped our bus

and asked us to lend a hand to push the bus.

We got down.

Uninterested, I stood aside. My friends began to push the bus inch by inch. When they were exhausted, shouting "Superman in action" I pushed the bus. It disappeared! Naturally, everybody was curious about what I had done.

During the games period, I was playing football. That day we had a match with another class. My playmates considered me a good scorer in the penalty stroke round. And I got a chance to prove myself. I was tense; my friends advised me to kick the ball lightly. I gave it a light kick. The ball flew right into the goalkeeper's hands, but the cheers grew as both the ball and the keeper went into the net. During the second half of the match, I accidentally kicked the ball upwards and it never came back.

By the end of the day I had earned the name of 'Demolition Man'. When I played basketball, I broke the board; the whole switchboard collapsed when I tried to switch on the fan; when I rested my back against a banyan tree, the huge tree fell.

These small incidents did not miss the public eye. Journalists came to interview me. I was photographed. Many companies and producers even made me sign contracts for their advertisements and films.

After an exotic and eventful day, when I turned on the TV, the newsreader reported that a strange object, the size of a football, had been sighted in space. I turned out the lights and went to bed. Yes, it was unmistakably the same creature. It had returned to take back my power. It

started sucking out the green liquid, but it soon began drawing my blood too. I shouted, "Leave me alone, you nasty creature. Let me live. Get away. Please, let me live!" The creature's vicious sting hurt and I winced. I gathered the strength to fight back and slowly opened my eyes.

Was it a miracle? There was no evil creature in front of me, only my Biology teacher pinching me for sleeping. The whole class was roaring with laughter and even my teacher joined them. At last I too had fallen under her spell.



FANNY'S TEDDY BEAR



**Story: Purnima G. (10),
Padma Seshadri
Bal Bhavan Sr. Sec.
School, Madras
Illustrations:
Ajanta Guhathakurta**

TOYLAND was a place which Santa Claus visited every year to pick up gifts for the children of the world. Toys of all varieties, and characters we come across in comic books and fairy tales lived there.

The three bears, whom Goldilocks once met, also lived there. Mama Bear had given birth to another little bear. The elder child was now longing to get out of Toyland and see the world.

Just before Christmas Santa visited Toyland to select toys for the good children of the world. Little Bear offered to go with Santa. Santa took him readily along with some other toys in a sack. Off they went in the reindeer sledge singing 'Jingle Bells...'

Santa always got to know what children

wanted for Christmas through their dreams. He put Little Bear in the stocking of a girl called Fanny who had always longed for a cuddly bear. Fanny was really thrilled about the gift from Santa Claus. She kept him with all the other toys in the cupboard. She showered him with love and affection. Little Bear also liked her and decided to help her in whatever way he could.

One night a thief tried to reach for Fanny's piggy bank through the window. Little Bear, who had seen Fanny drop coins into the piggy bank, understood



the page of the notebook. Then he coloured his face, eyes, mouth and ears and pressed his face to the page. It resulted in a lifelike picture of a teddy bear.

Fanny was surprised to see the drawing. She thought just like she had read in her story-books, she had a Fairy Godmother. That *her* Fairy Godmother must have been pleased with her behaviour and must have done the drawing as a reward. When she submitted it to her art teacher, she was given a good grade.

Fanny's grandmother lived abroad. One day

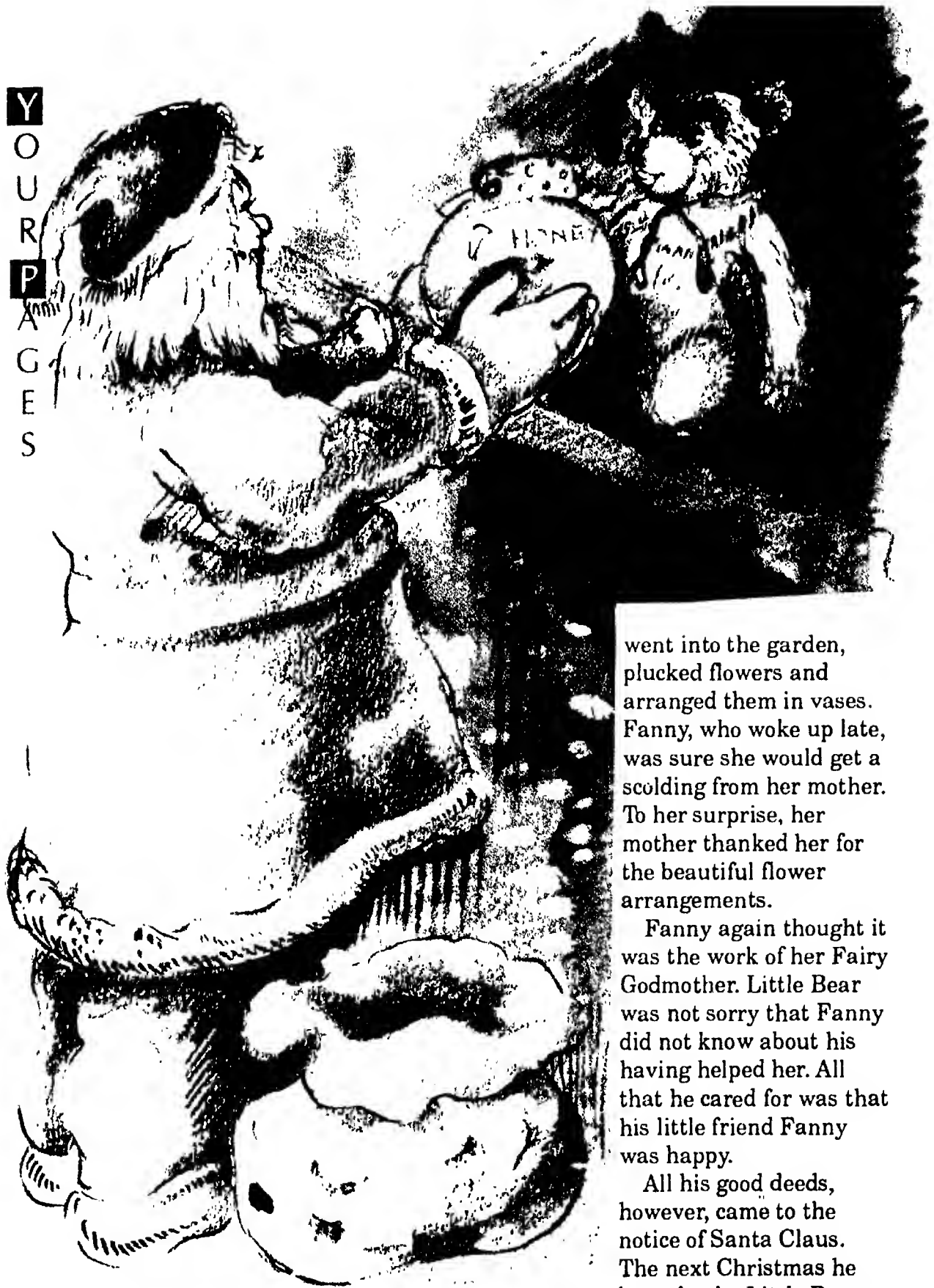
Fanny's family received a phone call about Granny's visit. The night before Granny's visit, Fanny's mother told her that she would be going to the airport early the next morning to receive Granny. It was Fanny's duty to pick flowers from the garden and arrange them in vases to welcome Granny.

That night Fanny worked late on her lessons. She could not wake up early in the morning as her mother wanted. The Little Bear's heart went out to the little girl who was sleeping soundly. He decided to help her. He

the thief's intention. He at once pushed down all his companions from the cupboard. That caused a commotion and the thief ran away fearing that the people in the house would wake up.

One day Fanny had to make a drawing in her art book. Unable to decide what to draw, she left her art book open and went to the terrace to read one of her favourite fairy tales. Little Bear wanted to help her out. When he saw the wet paint in the palette, an idea struck him. He painted his back a brown colour and pressed himself against





went into the garden, plucked flowers and arranged them in vases. Fanny, who woke up late, was sure she would get a scolding from her mother. To her surprise, her mother thanked her for the beautiful flower arrangements.

Fanny again thought it was the work of her Fairy Godmother. Little Bear was not sorry that Fanny did not know about his having helped her. All that he cared for was that his little friend Fanny was happy.

All his good deeds, however, came to the notice of Santa Claus. The next Christmas he brought the Little Bear a gift—a potful of honey.

CHILD LABOUR

Jasmine Kaur Kharbanda (12)
Guru Harkrishan Public School
New Delhi

Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterjee

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*Childhood is a tender age
To be loved, not to be in a cage,
To play, sing and run
Be mischievous for fun
And to learn and write with little fingers
But not to let them burn.
Those who force a child to labour
In factories, mines, farms or by a neighbour
Invite God's curse and human wrath
For practising bondage and treading a cruel path.
If one truly wants His grace
Let children wear a happy face.
A child is the incarnation of God
Do not abuse him, or use the rod
Give him affection and be polite
For love and freedom is his right
I, rather, beseech all to love a child
To love a child is to love the Lord.*



Coming of Age

Story: Harish K.S. (15)
Cholthram School,
Indore

Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

THEY ran hard and fast. It was the sporting festival of the century. The year 2000 Olympics at Sydney. They had both got a superb start off the blocks. Forget the competition. This was going to be a one-to-one battle. They approached the 250 metres mark. They were still running neck and neck.

From the time Oliver had emerged as a star, comparisons with Delaitre, the 'running machine', had been inevitable. They had been room-mates in the army and surprisingly—even shockingly—Oliver hardly ever showed any spirit of camaraderie. In all the races he lost, all the times he was wrong—and he was a sore loser—one would never see him go up to the winner and shake hands. People had

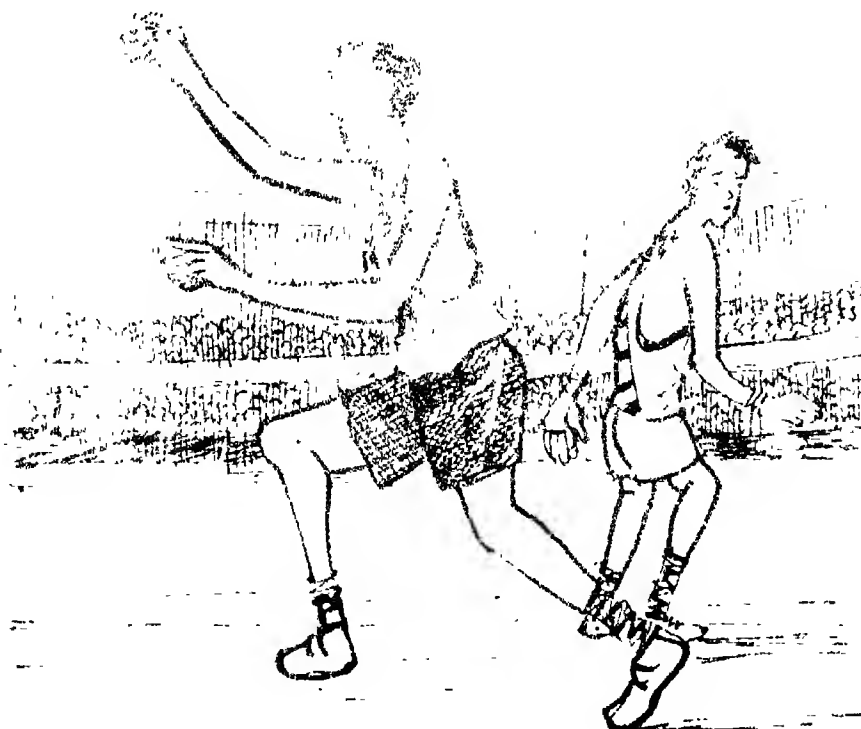
got used to his lack of good manners. I continued to watch this titanic struggle on my television set.

They now approached the finish line. They had covered 350 metres, with nothing to separate them. The 'running machine' vs 'the unfriendly monster' showdown was coming to an end, and one almost willed Oliver to lose.

And so it happened! In the final 20 metres Delaitre pulled away and

finished about a metre ahead. The crowd began to sense an explosion. Oliver would run off into the distance—refusing as always to congratulate the winner. The spectators began clearing their throats. They wanted to 'boo' him off the tracks.

After a long time... a very long time... Oliver rose. He walked towards Delaitre with a grim expression. He looked as if he would kill him. For a



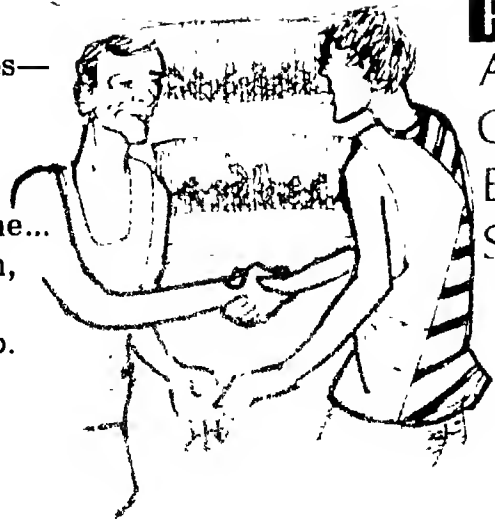
moment, the crowd held its collective breath. He held out his hand and shook hands with Delaitre and said what he had never, ever said in his 26 years of life, "You were great, man!"

Oliver almost choked there. All these years, defeat had meant embarrassment to him. Now, it meant disappointment. He was too stunned to throw a tantrum. He just stood there, hands on hips, looking distant and lost.

And then, he smiled; he smiled in defeat and waved to the crowd. Instantaneously, they roared. He got the applause even a victor would not get.

I was reminded of Rudyard Kipling's lines—
'If you can meet with triumph and disaster;
and treat these two impostors just the same...
then you will be a man,
my son!'

Oliver had grown up.
I could tell.
He was now a man.



WHY GOD MADE FRIENDS?

Amit Ghorawat (12)
Cholthram School, Indore

*God in his wisdom made a friend
Someone on whom we can depend
A loyal friend who would understand,
And always lend a helping hand,
He felt we would need someone who
Could comfort us when we had the blues
Whose special warmth and happy smile
Would make us feel that life's worthwhile,
Someone with whom to take a walk
Share a book or have a talk,
Who'd chat for hours on the phone
Or sense our need to be alone.
In short, God made a friend to be
Someone we're always glad to see
There's little else that God can send
That means as much as one good friend.*





When I Am Alone

Radhika Joneja (15)
Delhi Public School, Hardwar

Illustrations: Nilabho

When the lights are out
And my mother is *not at home*,
I sit on a chair,
Thinking what might happen
If a ghost came.
Half afraid,
I sit quietly in a corner
With my eyes closed and my heart
Beating fast.
I wonder what might happen
If a ghost really came
To eat me like a sandwich or a sweet dish,
Or crunch me like potato chips
Or bake me in an oven like a cake.
Then I try to console myself
That all ghosts are not the same.
Let me hope for the best—
That the ghost will also be the best.



LIFE

Radhika Joneja (15)
Delhi Public School, Hardwar

Life is a flower.
Let it bloom,
Every day, every night.
Once the petals fall,
They can't be put back.
Life is a smile in tears
The smile is one thing
Which is always yours
Do not lose it
Once gone,
It may never return.
Life is a tree
Water it with love
Water it with care
You will get the fruit
Sweet, juicy fruit.
Life is a song.
The voice is yours.
If you do not sing
It is your fault
Life is life.
You have to take the dew,
You have to take the dryness
Joys and sorrow go together
In a way, that's life.

Maninder Singh (16)
Harmanjit Singh (16)
Guru Harkrishan Public School, New Delhi
Illustration: Shalini Agarwal

*You have been a friend who is true,
And stood by my side all through
There were many times when I was distressed
But you cheered me and didn't let me be depressed.
When everyone thought I was wrong,
You supported me and made me feel strong
You changed my wrongs to right,
And allowed me to smile with happiness and delight!
When I was alone,
You made me feel that you were my very own.
Like every relationship, ours too faces ups and downs*

*But like always, in the end I know we'll have love and
peace around.*

*Friendship based on trust and understanding,
Is the one which is longlasting.
I hope ours is one of those,
And takes a never-ending course.*

LOVE



Retold by: Binay
Bhusan Mishra (14)
Rayagada
Illustrations:
Ajanta Guhathakurta

Jayadeva was a famous poet of Orissa. He wrote the *Geeta Govinda* which describes the eternal love of Lord Krishna and Radha.

Jayadeva was also an accomplished musician, while his wife Padmavati was an exquisite dancer. While she danced, he sang the *Geeta Govinda*. They made a perfect pair, complimenting each other's talents. Their love was as deep as that of Lord Krishna and Radha.

The King of Orissa had great respect for this

couple whose lives were completely dedicated to the Lord.

Once, when Padmavati was with the queen and other ladies of the court, they talked about a woman who was a great *pativrata*. When her husband died, she followed him to the cremation ground and burnt herself on his funeral pyre. All the ladies praised her but Padmavati remained silent. The queen then said, "What do you think about it, Padmavati?"

Padmavati replied,

"Your Majesty, I do not think much of the love of a woman who could live to reach the cremation ground after her husband's death. Will not a real *pativrata* drop down dead the moment her husband dies?"

The queen and her companions were surprised to hear Padmavati's view.

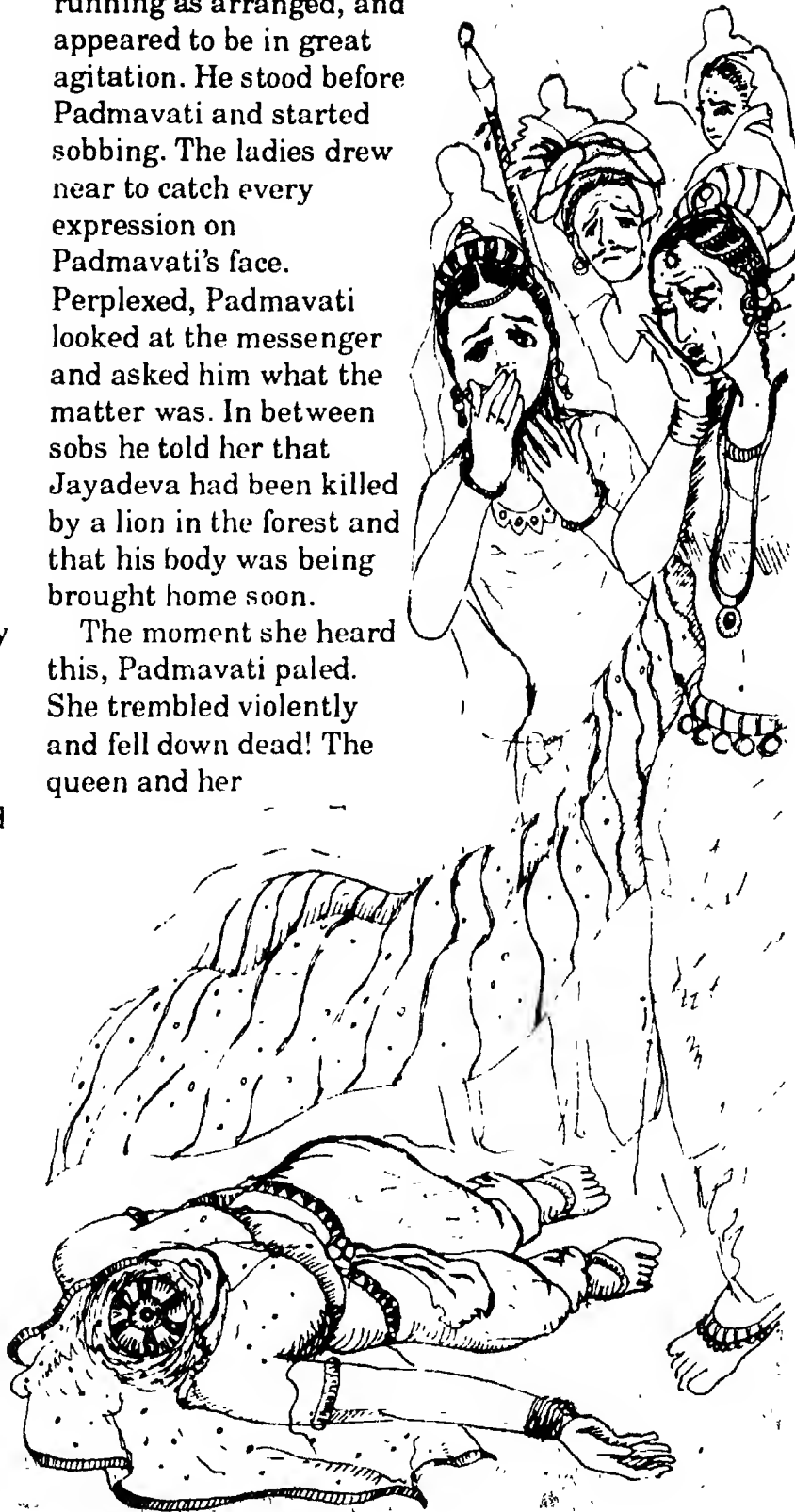
After Padmavati left, the ladies criticised her opinion. The truth, they felt, would be known when she faced such a situation. One of them said, "I have an idea. Why don't we send a false report about the death of her husband and see her reaction?"

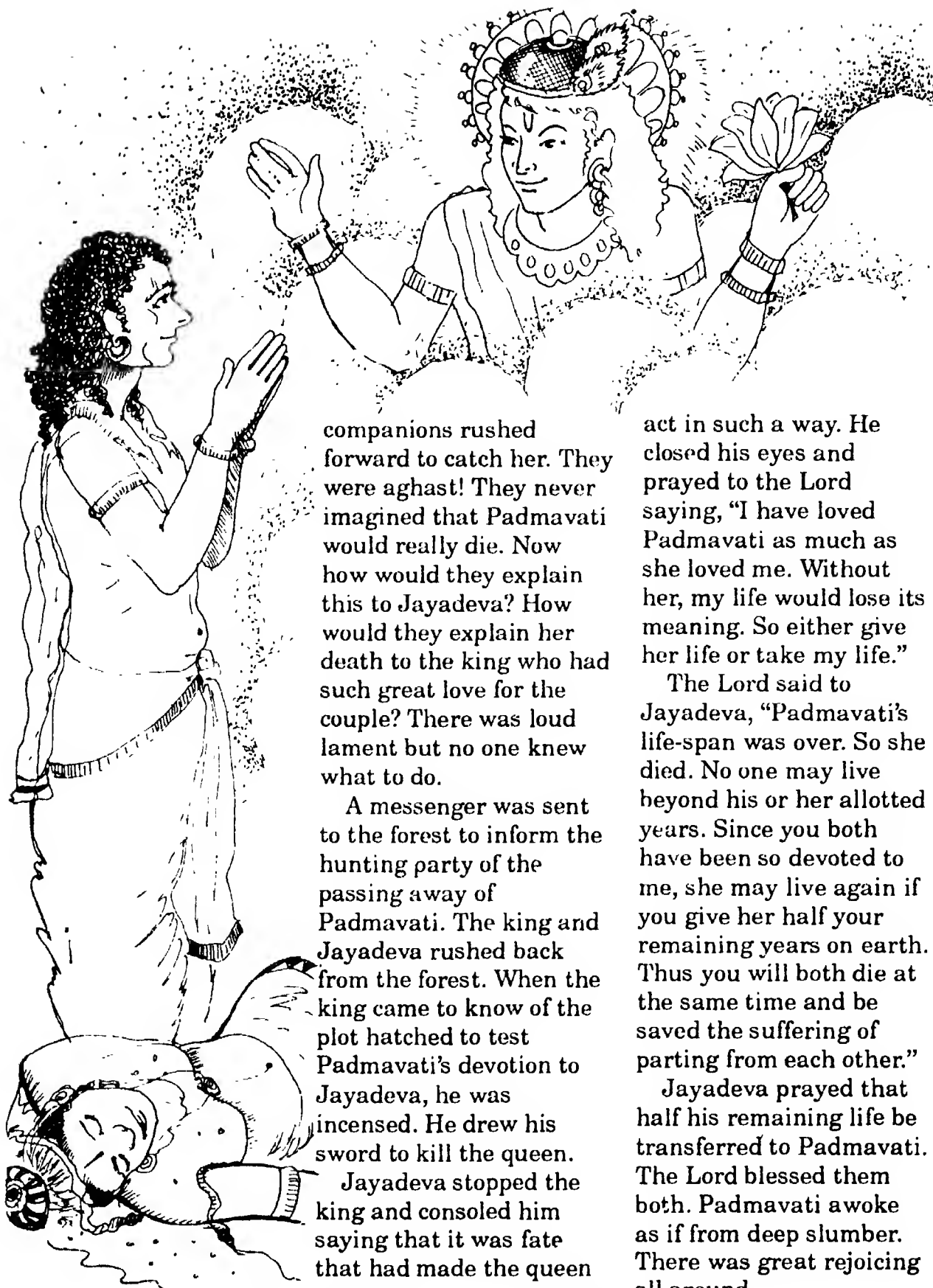
The ladies schemed and planned and got their opportunity soon. Jayadeva had accompanied the king on a hunting expedition. They were to be away for a couple of days. On the second day of the expedition, the queen asked one of the attendants to bring urgent information, as if from the forest, that Jayadeva had been killed by a lion during the hunt. The queen and other ladies of the court gathered at Padmavati's house to be present when the information came.

While everyone sat and talked, a man came running as arranged, and appeared to be in great agitation. He stood before Padmavati and started sobbing. The ladies drew near to catch every expression on Padmavati's face.

Perplexed, Padmavati looked at the messenger and asked him what the matter was. In between sobs he told her that Jayadeva had been killed by a lion in the forest and that his body was being brought home soon.

The moment she heard this, Padmavati paled. She trembled violently and fell down dead! The queen and her





companions rushed forward to catch her. They were aghast! They never imagined that Padmavati would really die. Now how would they explain this to Jayadeva? How would they explain her death to the king who had such great love for the couple? There was loud lament but no one knew what to do.

A messenger was sent to the forest to inform the hunting party of the passing away of Padmavati. The king and Jayadeva rushed back from the forest. When the king came to know of the plot hatched to test Padmavati's devotion to Jayadeva, he was incensed. He drew his sword to kill the queen.

Jayadeva stopped the king and consoled him saying that it was fate that had made the queen

act in such a way. He closed his eyes and prayed to the Lord saying, "I have loved Padmavati as much as she loved me. Without her, my life would lose its meaning. So either give her life or take my life."

The Lord said to Jayadeva, "Padmavati's life-span was over. So she died. No one may live beyond his or her allotted years. Since you both have been so devoted to me, she may live again if you give her half your remaining years on earth. Thus you will both die at the same time and be saved the suffering of parting from each other."

Jayadeva prayed that half his remaining life be transferred to Padmavati. The Lord blessed them both. Padmavati awoke as if from deep slumber. There was great rejoicing all around.

Abbas Amerjee (17)
Choithram School Indore
Illustration: Beejee

*Here is the dawn of my life
The deciding chapter open
Two roads diverge in front of me
And I know not where to go.
The stakes are down now
The road has to be embarked upon
The paths lie spread before me
And I know not which to tread.
Is it to be a gay life then?
With devil-may-care gypsy abandon
The wild flings, the bright attractions
The flashing dreams and intoxicating euphoria?
Or is it to be an industrious life?
The everyday trudging up and down
Ceaselessly along the path of knowledge
The serious, the sombre, the grave life?
Which is the path to be taken
Will someone please tell me?
For the choices lie before me.
And I know not what to do.*

This Teen Life.

**Story: Anjum Dhir (16),
Modern School, Vasant
Vihar, New Delhi**

**Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury.**

I remember the time when I was a shy little girl, just entering my teens. Oh, how my parents used to encourage me to go out and make new friends. "How are you going to develop as a person if you stay cooped up in the house all day, ruining your eyes by watching too much TV and your ears by talking continuously on the phone?" This constant refrain gave me such a complex that I started feeling that if I stayed home I would grow into a fat blimp.

So, I went out. I went out and made friends. To me it was a gradual process but to my Mom it was a sudden breakthrough. In fact I

made so many friends that now, when I am 16 (and keep getting blank calls every hour), my Mom is fed up of my friends.

Recently, my mother shouted at three of my close friends who had come to take me out for a walk. She feels we go for these "walks" without any

purpose. Anyway, at the moment, I am locked up in my house. Just the right time to throw a party, would you not say? Well, one of my friends thought so too, and she has fixed a party for the following week.

Apparently my parents had the same idea. So when I went up to my parents to ask for permission, rather weakly, I got a flat 'No'. Why? Reason 1: Mom doesn't like my friends. Reason 2: Dad is throwing a party on the same day. He says his friends will laugh when he tells them that his daughter has gone for a party when there is a party at home.

A week later. I finally convinced my parents to send me to my friend's party. I would prefer to keep the "how I did it" a secret. All I can reveal is I cried, sulked and tried every trick in the book.

Anyway, then came the question of curfews—by what time would I be back home? Hey, it sure is the biggest question in the book.

"9.30?" my Dad offered.

"10.30," said my Mom.

My more liberal granny offered, "11.30?"

"12 o'clock," I declared, only to be stared at by the

wide-eyed oldies.

It was finally fixed at 11.30. I believe my Dad had started pacing the floor from 11.00 p.m. till 11.45 p.m. precisely, the time I reached home, after a great party only to be greeted by three different lectures from three different people. Boy, people never change, do they?

Story: Akshat Agarwal
(13)

St. Columba's School,
New Delhi

Illustrations:
Ajanta Guhathakurta

IT WAS winter time and I was feeling rather sleepy in my boarding school. The lessons, as usual, were dull and the teachers rather boring. Instead of concentrating on the lesson, I was trying to liven up things a bit.

I couldn't think of anything so I gave up. At night while going to bed, I looked out of the window and saw the old cemetery beside the school. It was said to date back to the British Raj, and was believed to be haunted by the ghosts of those killed in the 1857 mutiny.

Though I didn't (maybe I did) believe in ghosts, I thought exploring it at midnight wouldn't do any harm. I let my friends into my secret, and soon I had five eager volunteers to go with me. We decided that Sunday night would be the most suitable time for ghost hunting (call it haunting).

On Sunday night, dressed in jackets and trying to feel rather bold,

we entered the cemetery. To tell the truth, we all had goose pimples. It was so silent that nothing moved except us. Though scared, we were secretly hoping that something would happen.

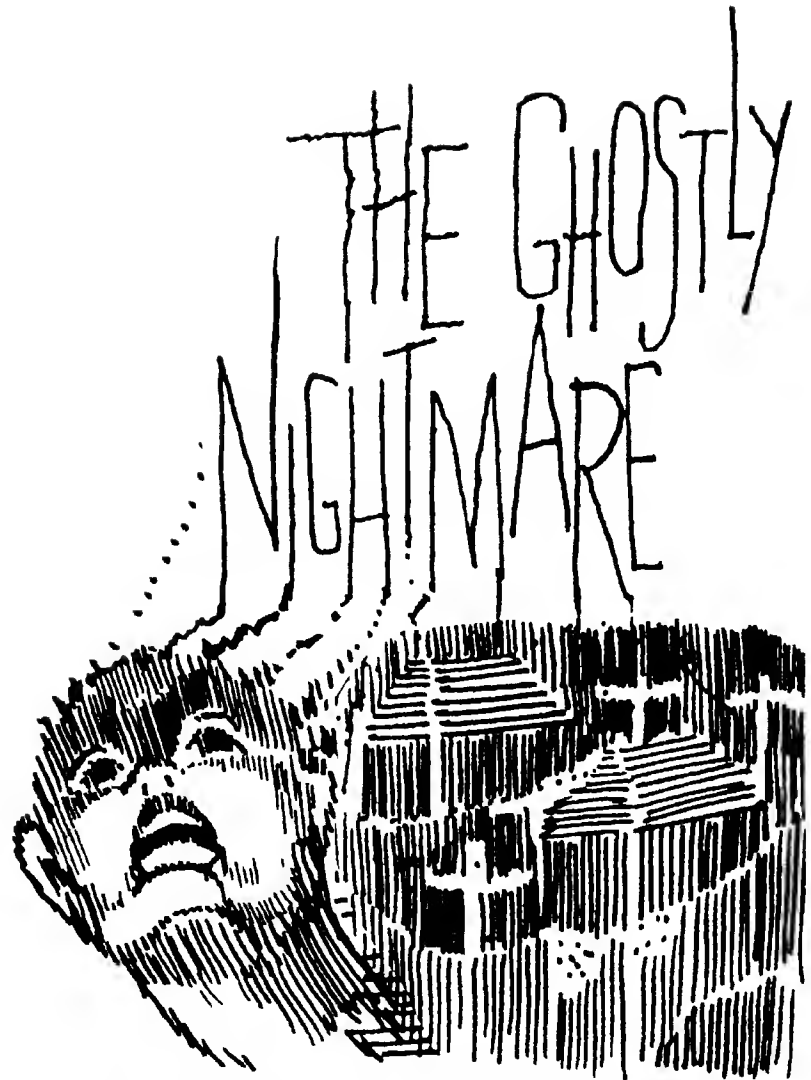
Unfortunately nothing did, so we returned thinking that ghosts too observed holidays or took weekends off.

We decided to try again, since this attempt had failed. A Wednesday night was selected for this expedition.

We were again in our

jackets because of the cold wind. We kept as close as possible to each other, both because of the cold as well as fright.

Aaaieee! Aaaieee!
Suddenly this loud scream was heard and we jumped out of our skins. Then, rather foolishly, we carried on. As a strong blast of wind blew, a white apparition came out of the trees. It was floating in mid air, glowing in the moonlight. It sort of came towards us (or so we thought) and we ran like mad. We bumped



into another ghost as he tried to catch us in his grip. His grip loosened for a second. That was all we needed. We ran as if we intended to set a new Olympic record! The fellow in the front tripped and we all fell in a heap, our breath knocked out. This made us hurry even more and we rushed into

the school building.

However, we were still not convinced that we had seen ghosts. We went the next morning to the cemetery and saw an old white sheet lying near the trees. We then realised this was our "mysterious white apparition". After surveying the area, we realised that the 'ghost'

which we imagined had caught us was nothing but an old tree. But where the scream had come from, we never got to know.

I realised that we had made such a fuss for nothing, really. On the other hand the actual ghosts must have had a 'human' nightmare!

Stars

Feni Chawla (13)

Delhi Public School, R.K. Puram, New Delhi

Illustration:

Ajanta Guhathakurta

After a long, weary day
After long hours of work and play
After everyone's energy is lost
The sun has set and only night stays.
The stars peep through the night sky
They never sleep, they never rest
Shining like jewels in the sky
They come to fulfil some secret quest.
But no one has the time to find
At night, why these stars do shine?
Unaware of their presence, all rest
When it's nature's most beautiful time
No one notices them
No one cares
But still stars come out
To show that they are there.
Always thinking, that they
Will be noticed by man some day
Always trying to fulfil their quest
Every night, coming out our way.

Man's Supreme Duty

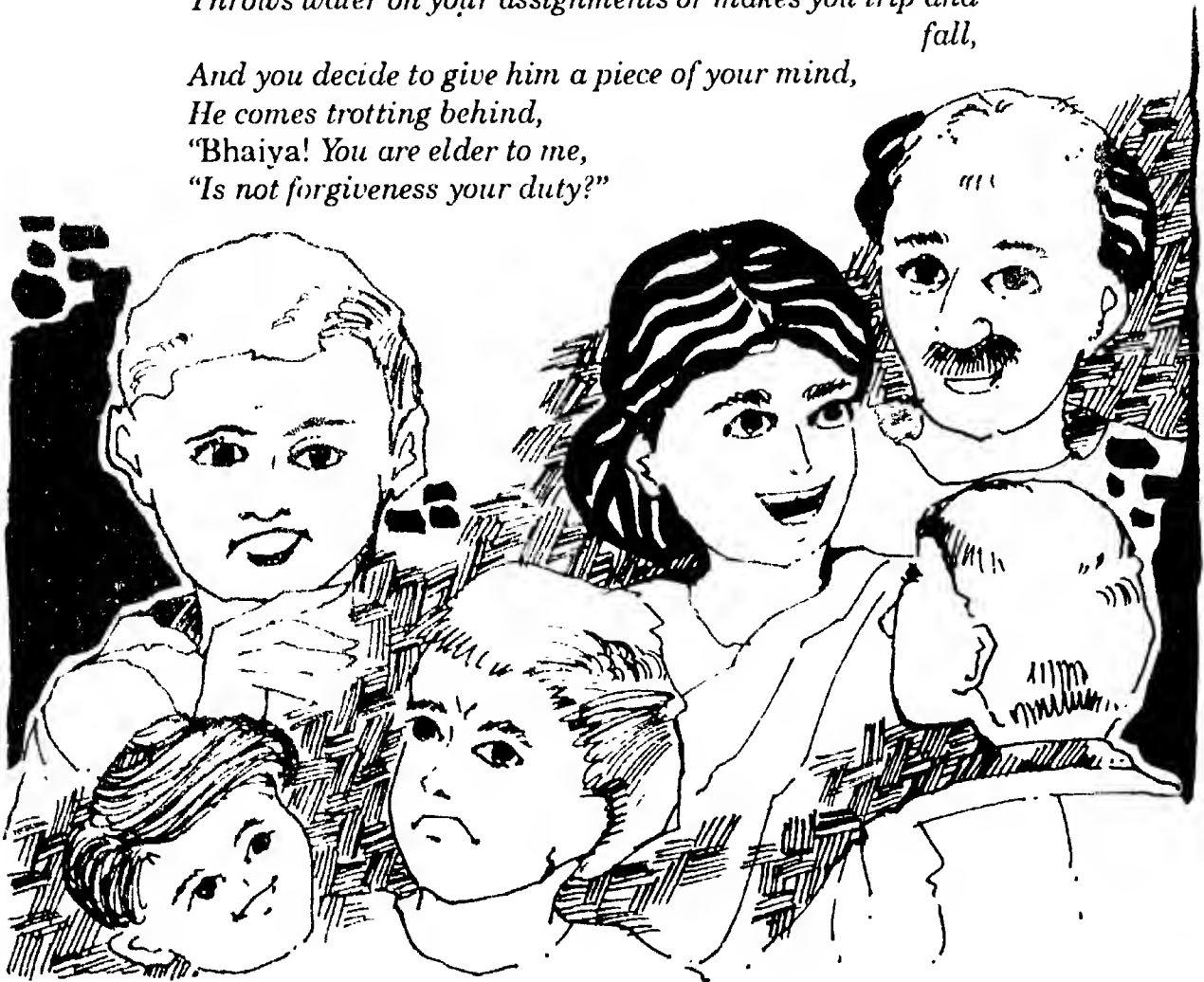
Rahul Srinivasan (16)
Gyan Bharati School, New Delhi
Illustrations: Shalini Agarwal

*When the big ones tell black and white lies,
Stoop so low that no mercy will they get—even from the
skies,*

*And you complain to aunts, uncles and parents,
You are told, "Beta, they are elderly ladies and gents,
Whatever they do is right and nothing else."
And you are forced to keep your feelings to yourself.*

*But when someone young and small,
Throws water on your assignments or makes you trip and
fall,*

*And you decide to give him a piece of your mind,
He comes trotting behind,
"Bhaiya! You are elder to me,
"Is not forgiveness your duty?"*



*No problem! You can always get even with someone your
own age,
And when your classmate plays a nasty prank, putting
you in a terrific rage,
He comes up to you with eyes opened wide,
You decide to make him repent for what he devised,
"Yaar! Don't be such a spoilsport and get upset at a joke,
C'mon, just laugh over it, what a serious bloke!"*

*No doubt when your guests try to act smart and misbehave,
You can scold them—something which you really crave,
But when they tear down your rare posters and mess up
your room,
And you decide to make the culprits clean up with nothing
less than a broom,
They say, "It's your duty to clear it up yourself," scold us
politely—at the most,
We will never come here again—you are a very mean host!"*

*A poet can bore the masses—no questions asked,
So claim readers about writers present and past,
And when you show this work to a person well-versed and
worthy,
Expecting praise for which everyone is thirsty,
He says this poem may reflect the truth about friends and
kin,
Yet, it is nothing but your duty to throw this work into the
dustbin!*



Y Aunt Esther's friend, but an old grouch.

O "Granted," boomed Zak and disappeared.

U Later at home, Kristy began to feel very hot and uncomfortable. She looked in the mirror and screamed, for her face was covered with tiny, red dots.

E "Oh, dear. You've got chicken pox," cried Aunt Esther. "This means that we can't go to Mrs. Primley's today. And you have to go to bed, dear."

After one week, Kristy was able to get out of bed. She dressed quickly and uncorked the bottle. Zak floated out and asked, "Did you go to Mrs. Primley's?"

"No," said Kristy pouting. "But I had to stay in bed with chicken pox. Why did you make me fall sick, silly?"

"Oh, sorry. But your wish came true, didn't it?" asked Zak.

"It's okay. I've thought of my last wish," said Kristy. "I wish that I make a friend this summer."

"Hmm, that's pretty hard. I can't make friends appear out of thin air, you know," said Zak thoughtfully. "But if you can figure out this riddle,

you will get a friend."

This was the riddle which Zak posed:

*"A letter to post,
A long way to walk,
A drive back home,
A friend with whom to talk."*

And he disappeared in a puff of smoke.

The next day Kristy was reading a book on pets when Aunt Esther called her and said, "Please walk to town and post this letter for me."

Kristy was about to say no because the town was so far, but she remembered that the riddle said she would go.

It was a long walk and by the time she reached the post box she was really tired. She slipped the letter into the slit in the post box and turned round. She saw a girl who was about her age busily looking for something on the ground.

"Hello, I'm Kristy. Are you looking for something?" she asked.

"Oh, hi. I'm Janet. I have lost my letter. Please help me find it," said the girl. So Kristy helped her look for the letter, but soon it started raining heavily. Still, they continued looking for it. They found it and posted it. Then they ran into a

nearby shop.

"Thank you," said Janet, "I'd invite you for tea but I live about three or four kms away. My family just moved into a big house yesterday."

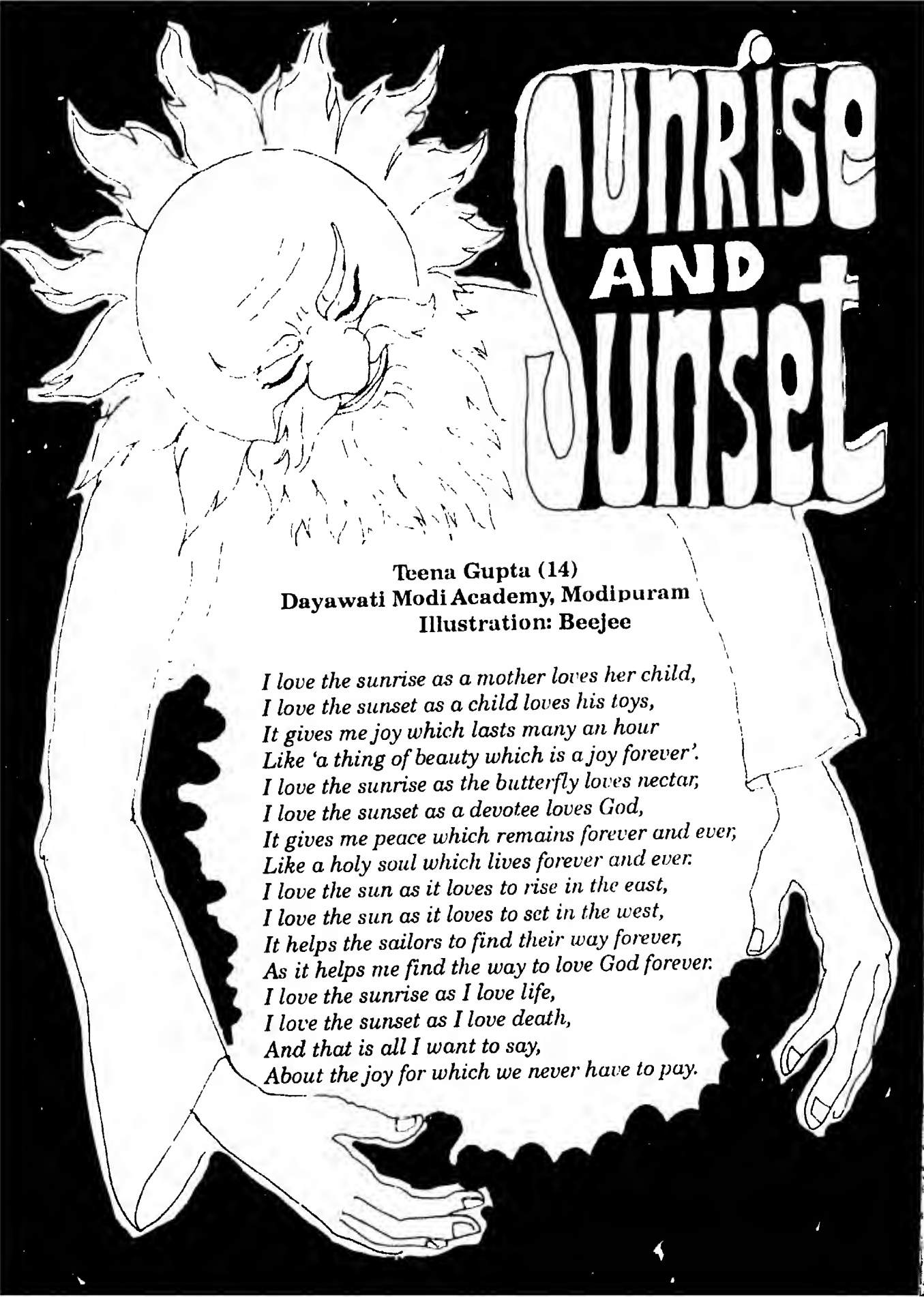
"Why! I live in that area, too!" exclaimed Kristy. "Why don't you come to my house?"

"Sure, my brother, Tom will drive us there," replied Janet.

During the drive they talked and joked a lot and then Janet went to Kristy's house. Soon they were good friends.

"Well, I guess my last wish has come true," said Kristy with a big smile on her face.





SUNRISE AND SUNSET

Teena Gupta (14)
Dayawati Modi Academy, Modipuram
Illustration: Beejee

*I love the sunrise as a mother loves her child,
I love the sunset as a child loves his toys,
It gives me joy which lasts many an hour
Like 'a thing of beauty which is a joy forever'.
I love the sunrise as the butterfly loves nectar,
I love the sunset as a devotee loves God,
It gives me peace which remains forever and ever,
Like a holy soul which lives forever and ever.
I love the sun as it loves to rise in the east,
I love the sun as it loves to set in the west,
It helps the sailors to find their way forever,
As it helps me find the way to love God forever.
I love the sunrise as I love life,
I love the sunset as I love death,
And that is all I want to say,
About the joy for which we never have to pay.*

Asterix



Compiled by:
M.S. Keerthi Shyam (13)
Julien Day School,
Calcutta

This is a quiz on two of the best loved comic characters of all time. Most of you have probably read at least some of their adventures. Here's a quiz to test your knowledge of these comic personalities.



BY
ii TOUTATIS!



Asterix

1. What is common to Asterix and Hercules?
2. According to Goscinny, what archaeologically important structure does Unhygienix, the village fishmonger, build?
3. In 'Asterix and Son', who is the Son?
4. Goscinny had many theories about things that baffled historians. What was his theory about how the Sphinx lost its nose?

5. How are Anthea Bell and Derek Hockridge associated with Asterix?
6. What is Druid Getafix always cutting with his golden sickle, from the trees?
7. Which literary character does Asterix meet in Spain?
8. What is common to Asterix and Jesus Christ?
9. Which other comic characters appear in Asterix books?
10. What is common to Unhygienix and a germ?



Tintin

① In 'Tintin and the Blue Lotus', which defunct international organization do you come across?

② Who was the first mate of the ship which Captain Haddock had captained?

③ In 'Red Rackham's Treasure', what 'treasure' does Captain Haddock obtain?

④ To which Tintin adventure can 'Tintin and the Blue Lotus' be considered a sequel?



⑤ In which story of Tintin does Asterix, along with many other cartoon characters, appear?

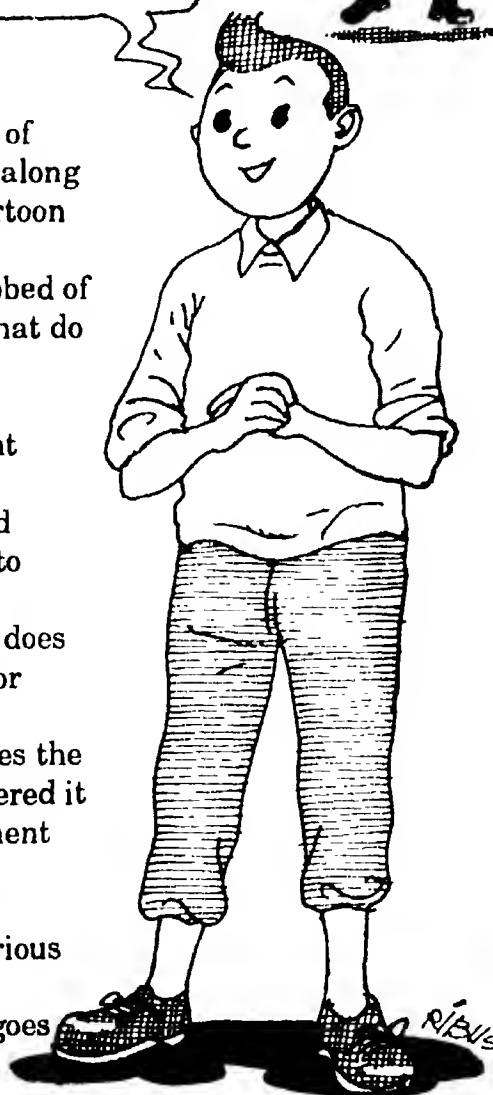
⑥ After being robbed of their wallet once, what do the Thomsons (or Thompsons for that matter) do to prevent further robberies?

⑦ Who translated Tintin from French to English?

⑧ In which story does Tintin meet Professor Calculus?

⑨ What name does the scientist who discovered it give to the new element found in the 'Fallen Meteorite'?

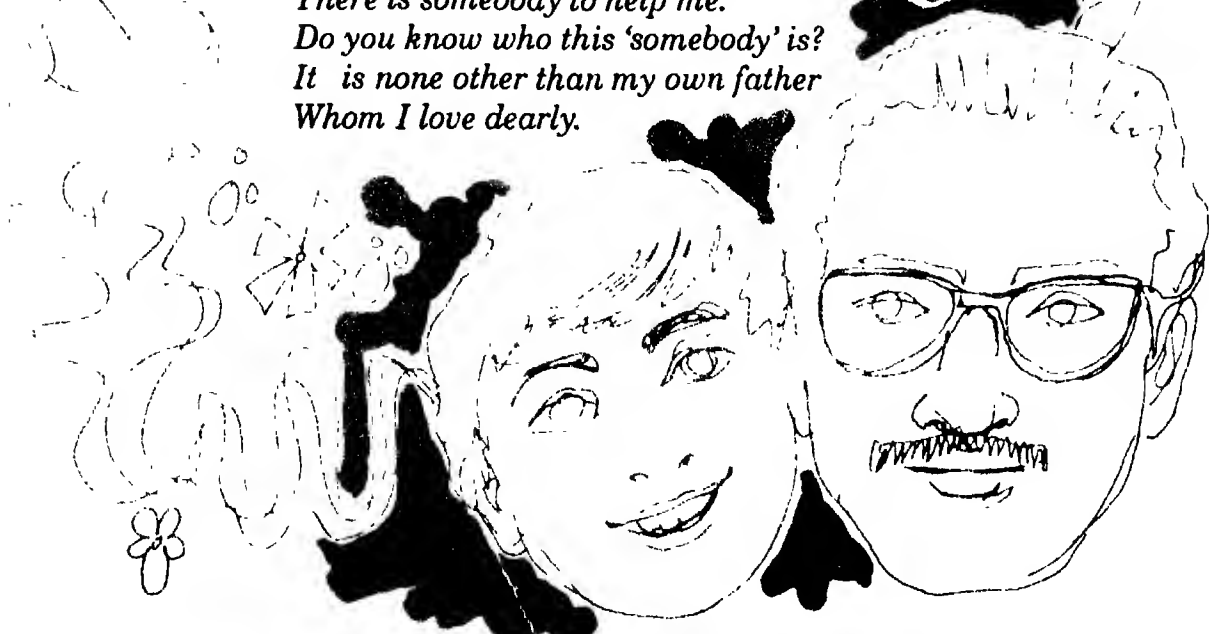
⑩ Which mysterious being does Tintin encounter when he goes to save his Chinese friend, Chang?



Somebody

Mirza Abdullah Khan (15)
Cholthram School, Indore
Illustration: Beejee

*When I am happy,
There is somebody to share the happiness.
When I am lonely,
There is somebody to keep me company.
When there is darkness,
There is somebody to guide me.
When I am sad,
There is somebody to make me happy.
When I am afraid,
There is somebody to hold my hand.
When I am worked up,
There is somebody to cheer me.
When I am confused and panicking,
There is somebody to help me.
Do you know who this 'somebody' is?
It is none other than my own father
Whom I love dearly.*



1ST
PRIZE

The Journey

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Story:
Amrapali Hazra (13)
Mother's International
School, New Delhi
Illustrations:
Subir Roy

NUSRAT, tall, dark, and rather a plain looking girl of about 13 years, walked briskly in the pale light of dawn. Clad in a dirty *salwar kurti* and a faded *chunni* draped across her shoulders, she hurried on. Though her face was expressionless, her eyes wore a look of deep, painful thought. Her pace never slowed, though she walked over muddy, weedy land. Nusrat lived in a small suburban village called Rohilpur, on the borders of Agra.

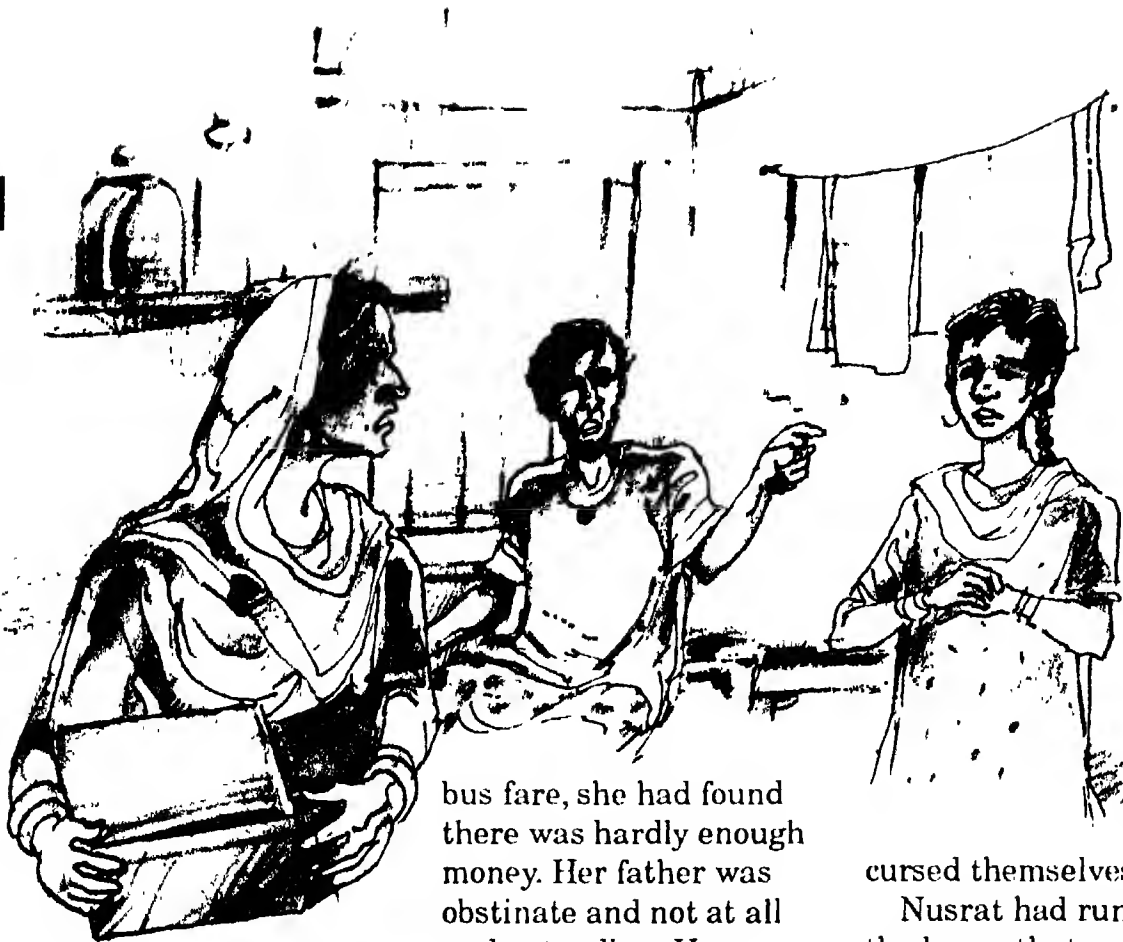
Nusrat went to Agra daily to work at a carpet factory. Everyday she would walk 5 kms from her house to the highway to catch a bus to her workplace. When her father first started her on the job, the walk to the highway used to be tiring and the city confused her. But as time went by, the walk became just another part of her colourless life, and having learnt to be tough and independent, the largeness of Agra did

not scare her any longer.

Day after day, year after year, she worked in this manner, never complaining, making beautiful carpets for which she got a few measly rupees everyday. This sum she handed over to her mother for the education of her three brothers and for food and clothing for the family.

At home, being the only girl child, she ran every domestic errand, washed, cooked, cleaned and fetched.

Her brothers went to school in the morning and worked at a fireworks factory in the evening. However, their sincerity varied according to their needs. Often school would be skipped to go kite flying or for a swim and



the job would be sacrificed to watch TV at the Panchayat Hall.

For Nusrat, however, all this was beyond her wildest dreams. When she wasn't working, she was at home helping her mother.

This morning was no exception, only it was grimmer than other mornings. There had been a scene over money before she left. When her mother had opened the *sundook* (box) to give Nusrat her

bus fare, she had found there was hardly enough money. Her father was obstinate and not at all understanding. He blamed her mother for spending too much. Ma, nearly in tears, accused her eldest son of taking money without asking her, a common practice for him. Then all the wrath of her parents had been turned on her, for being useless and not being able to help the family during a financial crisis. They cursed God for giving them a daughter and when the usual topic of her wedding and dowry came up, her parents wailed and

cursed themselves.

Nusrat had run out of the house that morning without her fare and had kept on running the first kilometre. She took the usual road towards the highway. The walk seemed longer and she felt unusually sick at heart, though her feet mechanically carried her onwards.

As she walked, she thought of her parents, of the way they fussed over money. Her mind moulded to believe that money was the only thing that counted, and she dare not differ, still she

failed to understand her parents. She thought them selfish and her brothers a nuisance. She thought in terror of returning that evening with her day's pay. It would, of course, be taken away immediately and she would not be thanked, only abused and called lazy.

The thought of running away occurred to her. She would go to Delhi, never to return. She would save money and go to school. She pictured herself rising higher and higher in society... the road took a downward slant and opened out onto a tree-lined broad road. Nusrat knew she had no money for the bus that day. She watched as it went past. The conductor looked at her expectantly. She made no sign to him; he did not stop the bus.

A few minutes later a bullock cart came rumbling towards her. She hailed the old farmer who was driving the cart and asked for a ride to as far as he was going. She was in luck. He was going to Agra. With the rhythmic movement of the cart wheels and the soft breeze blowing through her hair, Nusrat admired the countryside

around her. She forgot her woes for a while, till she reached her destination. The grim factory loomed in the distance. She got down and thanked the farmer. She knew she was late and her employer was never too kind in this matter.

Preparing herself for a talking to, she timidly walked up to the door of the factory, only to find it locked. Nusrat was surprised. Her miserly and worldly employer was not one to give holidays. She enquired of a man nearby the reason for it being closed.

"Pandra Agast," he stated casually.

'What did it matter,' she thought angrily,

'whether it is 15th August or 16th August?'

She stared after the man as he walked away. It made her angrier still as she thought of her home and the ire she would have to face for not bringing back even a *paisa*. She knew the family needed money desperately and, at present, they all depended on her. How would she explain 'Pandra Agast' to her Abba?

As she walked away with a heavy heart, tear-filled eyes and a frown upon her brow, she thought such untimely holidays should not be announced.



2ND
PRIZE

Waiting for the Rain

Radhika Gupta (13)
American International School
Lagos, Nigeria

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

(As a slave of his country's rulers,
Tengo dreams of the
day his country will be free.)

*I just don't know what it is,
It brings me so much pain,
But life will change soon,
I'm waiting... waiting for the rain.
I'm waiting patiently,
For the real change in my life
It's a worthy struggle,
I don't think I'll survive.
Life will be much better
But it's a long way to go,
Sometimes you just have to wait,
But time will surely pass
When the good times come,
This is what we'll appreciate,
I just wish it would happen soon
How much longer am I to wait?
On this lonesome farm,
I will freely run,
Our people will have control,
When our time comes
We have the will, the power
This cruelty can't go on,
You can ill-treat us all you want,
But it won't last for long.
Nobody can stop us,
Nobody can come in our way,
Try all you can to stop us
But we'll be free some day.
We're gonna show who we are,
We'll prove our power and our strength
Just wait, and be ready,
For this cruelty will come to an end.
Someday, my dream will come true.
But right now, I'll bear the pain
I'm like a farmer, patiently waiting,
Waiting for the rain.*



What is the Earth?

Radhika Gupta (13)
American International School
Lagos, Nigeria

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

In dreams:

It is beauty

It is wonder

It is flowers

This world of ours

And trees

And mountains

And sunshine

And breeze

It is all the things

That are beautiful

That are perfect.

It is full

Of gorgeous things.

The world has no defect

In reality:

It is dirt

And pollution

And things that are terrible

That have no solution

It is violence

And crime

And swamps

And creepers

It is all the things that we hate

All the things we cause and despise

In reality, the world is not all that nice.

Dreams and reality,

Dirt and beauty

What a difference!

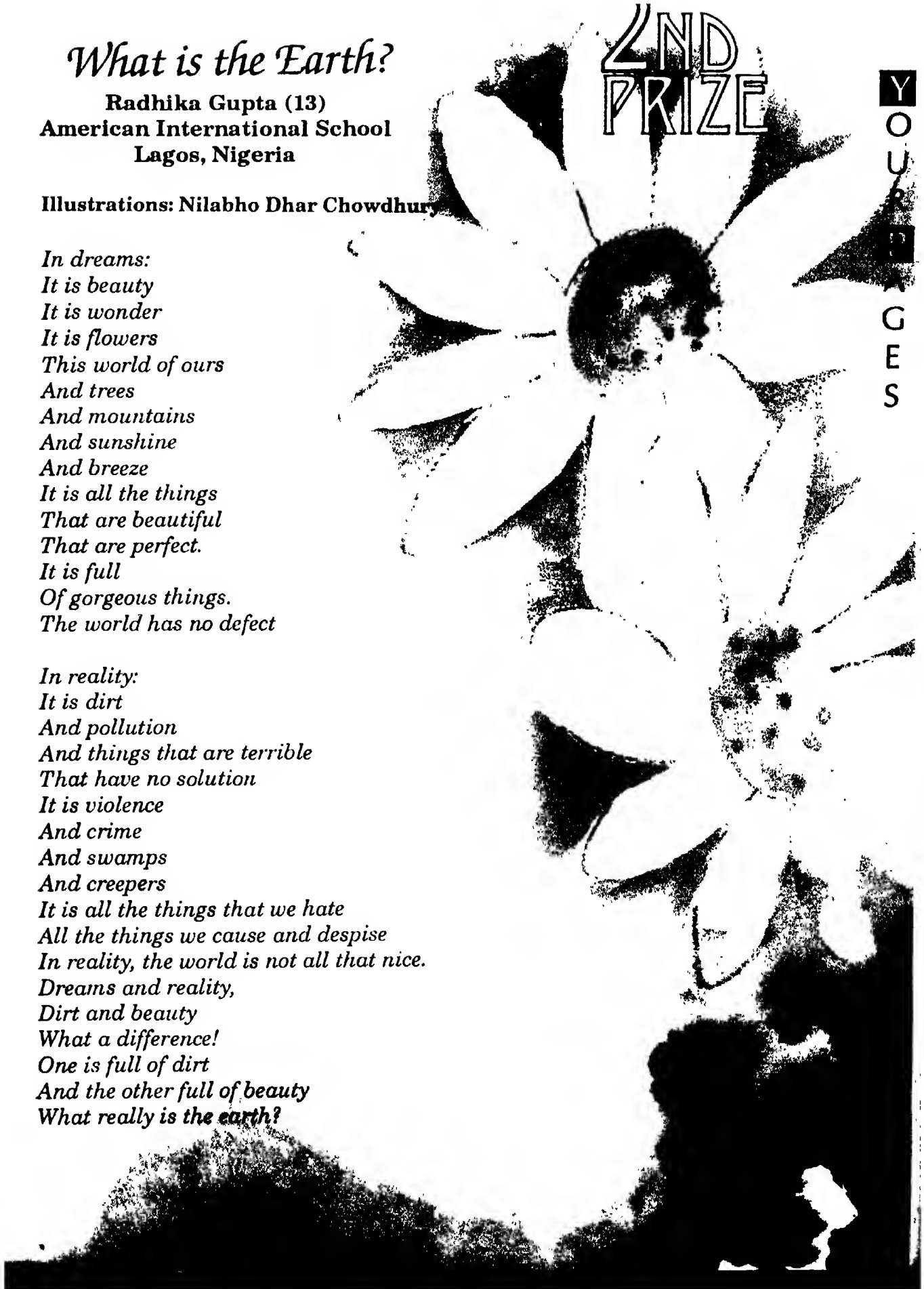
One is full of dirt

And the other full of beauty

What really is the earth?

**2ND
PRIZE**

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NOVEMBER 19 ROLL OF

*Amrapali Hazra
Radhika Gupta
Kannal Achuthan
Vinayak Garg
Prachi Chaturvedi
Mili Bhardwaj
Abhishek Nair
Vedashree Khambete
Abhijeet Pathak
Sandeep Sanye
Purnima G.
Anjum Dhir
Binay Bhushan Mishra
Rumeet Kaur
Jasmine Kaur Kharbanda
Maninder Singh
Harmanjit Singh
Geetha Ramaswami
Rahul Srinivasan
Teena Gupta
Vinod Jayakumar
M.S. Keerhi Shyam*



6 YOUR PAGES HONOUR

*Harish K.S.
Purva Upasak
Disha Rupayana
Amit Ghorawat
Mirza Abdullah Khan
Abbas Amerjee
Radhika Joneja
Kalyani Ganapathi
P. Vijayalakshmi
Meenal Batra
Sonam Wangchuk
Supriti Sethi
Vedashree Khambete
Anju Radhakrishnan
Anita Buragohain
Sonu Gupta
Ankit Agarwal
Akshat Agarwal
Feni Chawla
Sahodra Jha
Divya Nair*



THE RAIN

Story: Kannal Achuthan (15)
Holy Cross A.I. Higher
Secondary School,
Tuticorin

Illustrations: Beejee

I'VE ALWAYS had a strange fascination for rain. I would always be there when the monsoon broke out and the first raindrops touched the dusty earth.

As the rain fell fast on the muddy lanes and streets, they were magically transformed into puddles—big puddles, small puddles, oval puddles and puddles of all sizes and shapes.

When I was four years old, I loved to sit by the window and watch the rain. I was very curious about the hundreds of rings and circles that formed on the puddles everytime raindrops splashed into them. My mother cleared up this



mystery for me. "They are the Lilliputians," she explained.

To me the rings had always resembled crowds of people going somewhere. So this time I demanded, "Where do you think they are all going?"

"To the great feast," she replied, "where there will be hot *jalebis*, sweets, *idli* and *sambar*, *pakor*as and much more." I listened to all this with growing wonder.

After this little episode, whenever it rained I would conjure up all the delicacies at the feast. When the Lilliputians came out in the puddles, I would always imagine that I could smell the items at the 'Great Lilliputian Feast'.

My joy trebled when I found that I could make my own Lilliputians by filling a tub half-full with water and keeping it under the shower. I was sure to get wet whenever I created my 'own' Lilliputians.

School life then started for me. Lilliputians were pushed back into the deepest corners of my memory, and there they lay until...





My class Ten Board examinations were over. Three months of holidays stretched before me. It was then that Amma decided to pack me off to my grandmother's place for the holidays and that meant going to Kerala. Grandma shot one look at me and said, "She could do with some healthy food

to get that haggard look off her face," and added, "she'd better learn some cooking too." Cooking! That was the last thing I wanted to do. I had only wanted to explore coconut groves and play.

I was sitting uncomfortably thinking of what to say when little cousin Geethu appeared

from nowhere as if she was a genie. After a few minutes she came to me and showed me a doll with a broken leg. I sympathised with her and said I would fix it with Fevicol. We became firm friends after that. Geethu was three and a half years old. Next year, she told me, she would be

going to school. She felt mighty proud about that.

Geethu and I have one thing in common. We both love walks. Walking down country lanes, walking down narrow streets, walking along the fields, walking anywhere. We never went on very long walks since Geethu's legs would have ached.

One day we were walking down a quiet, dusty lane when, suddenly, drops of rain began to fall. Faster and faster they pelted us till we had to take shelter under the sunshade of a house. Meanwhile the lane was full of puddles.

"Who are they?" Geethu asked tugging at my skirt. I turned to look at what she was pointing to. I noticed the raindrops splashing into the puddles making circles, looking just like a crowd hurrying somewhere. Something clicked inside me. Old memories flashed by.

"Why, they are the Lilliputians," I told her.

"Lilliputians," she repeated in her childish, gurgling voice obviously pleased to learn a new word. After a pause she asked me, "Where do you think they are going?"

"To the great feast," I replied with new-found

enthusiasm. (I had almost lost my enthusiasm in the process of growing up and preparing for the Boards). "And at the great feast," I continued, "there will be *jalebis*, sweets, *vadas* and *chutney*, crisp *dosais* (Geethu's favourite) and of course *laddoos*." I could

get a faint whiff of these delicacies. My imagination had been lying asleep for so long.

"Come, let's go," I said. Clutching little Geethu's hand, I dashed homeward, splashing amidst those wonderful Lilliputians.



COMING

FOUR
PAGES

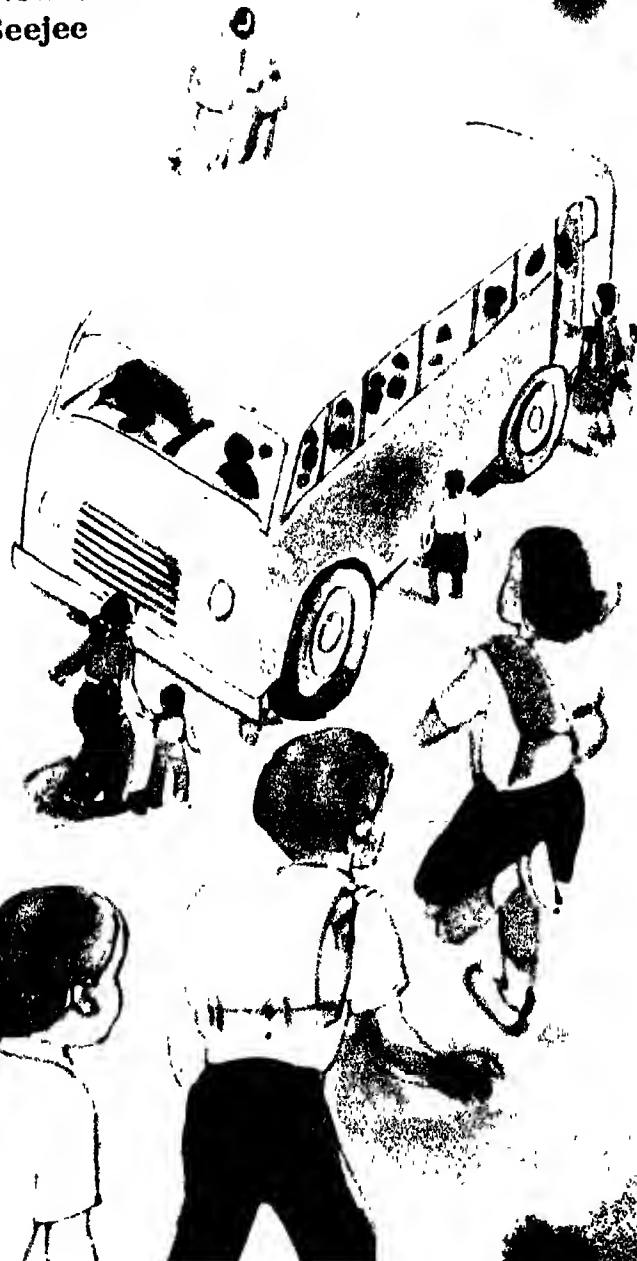
My School Bus

Vinayak Garg (9)

Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, New Delhi

Illustration: Beejee

*I travel to school by bus,
There is a lot of rush,
The roads are full
Of cars, buses and trucks.
The bus is full
Of boys and girls,
All going to school,
With their bags full.
Whenever there's a puncture,
Or a traffic jam,
We happily play together,
And enjoy ourselves.
We reach home late,
Find Mummy at the door,
Worrying about us,
Waiting for us.
She's happy to see me,
Safe and sound,
She hugs and kisses me,
And fusses around.
I like very much,
To be fussed about,
I like very much,
To travel by bus.*



MIRAGE

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Mill Bhardwaj (15)

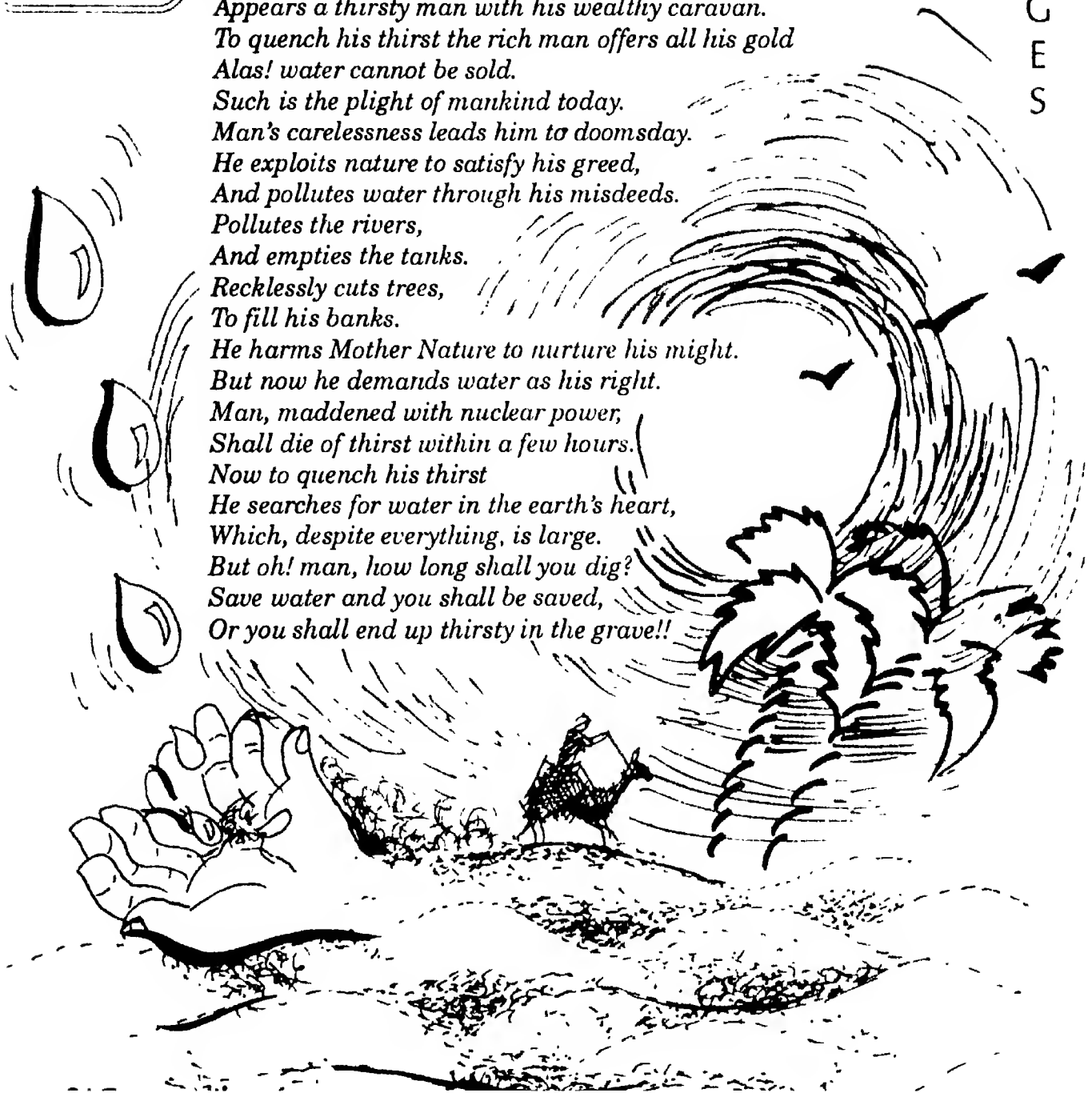
Govt. Model Senior Secondary School

Sector 10 A, Chandigarh

Illustrations: Pijush Dutta

HIGHLY
COMMENDED

*The merciless sun casts a hot eye on the desert land.
The scorching wind makes waves on the burning sand.
Through the blinding dust upon the horizon,
Appears a thirsty man with his wealthy caravan.
To quench his thirst the rich man offers all his gold
Alas! water cannot be sold.
Such is the plight of mankind today.
Man's carelessness leads him to doomsday.
He exploits nature to satisfy his greed,
And pollutes water through his misdeeds.
Pollutes the rivers,
And empties the tanks.
Recklessly cuts trees,
To fill his banks.
He harms Mother Nature to nurture his might.
But now he demands water as his right.
Man, maddened with nuclear power,
Shall die of thirst within a few hours.
Now to quench his thirst
He searches for water in the earth's heart,
Which, despite everything, is large.
But oh! man, how long shall you dig?
Save water and you shall be saved,
Or you shall end up thirsty in the grave!!*



Y Story: Abhishek Nair (14)
O The International School,
U Bangkok, Thailand
R Illustrations:
Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

HIGHLY
COMMEDED

The Summer of Discontent

P FATHER WAS desperate by the time the tax-collector came. His crops had not attained maturity and even if he tried to pay off the revenue there would not be much left to make ends meet. He was even more horrified when the collector demanded a larger sum than the previous year. One could see the big vein throbbing at his temple and the beads of sweat trickling down his pale face. Mother said he looked like a mortal with the noose of Yama about to tighten round his neck. But unlike the mortal whose fear of death had torn him apart first, father's fear was not for himself. It was for us that he toiled all day in the fields.

This was no concern of the tax-collector. He had been sent to collect the revenue. Not one *anna* less not one *anna* more. If he did not follow orders, it would be he who would be sent to the gallows first, not the farmers. Then there would be no use crying over spilt milk.



Besides, it was the revenue that got him his salary not his sympathy for the farmers.

Father knew that the argument wasn't leading anywhere. When he learned that the collector would not budge from his decision, he resolved not to give in without a fight. Father was an intrepid and respected man. He intended to show these virtues in the forthcoming events. The collector had other plans. A snap of his fingers was enough to bring two rough-looking hooligans to the spot. One look at them and my father knew that reasoning was hopeless but he still didn't give in to the collector's demand.

The taller of the two hooligans looked round with eyes flashing his perspicuous intent. The onlookers of the events correctly read his glance and scampered off to save their cowardly bodies. What happened next, no one knew. It could be guessed only a few days later when the *dhobi* went to the lake to wash his clothes. What he saw there frightened him out of his wits, and within a few minutes the whole village was there to inspect the scene. It was a

dreadful sight.

For the next few days, mother sat mourning along with some of our relatives. My two brothers and I sat and worried about what was going to happen to us. It was I who did the worrying, for my brothers were not old enough to understand everything. Father's death was the subject of gossip. People knew what had happened was the work of the hooligans but not a single person was courageous enough to do anything about it. They could not be blamed. After all, who would want to face the wrath of those two rowdies?

For the first few days after father's death, our neighbours were kind and frequently gave us some part of their food to survive upon. Mother found a job as part-time maid at the *Chota Sahib's* bungalow. She spent the rest of the time doing chores and running errands for some of our neighbours who were better off than us. I did the household chores and attended to my brothers. Little did we know that the future held more trouble for us.

Eight-year-old Ramu

was the first one to leave us. He was bedridden due to tuberculosis. For fear of being infected, our neighbours avoided our hut for a few days. I went as far as their doorsteps to ask for food and help. It had no effect on them. Their doors remained shut. Much as I tried to persuade them, they tried all the more not to listen to me.

After Ramu passed away, Gopal caught the disease too. This time mother persuaded the village priest to come and cure Gopal but his efforts were in vain. After Gopal's death, the house became very quiet and mother stopped doing errands for my sake. She still worked at the bungalow. At times, she tried hard not to show her tears. She could not sleep at night and had no more grief left to shed. I stopped going to the village school to save money. Years later, I was to regret having done this. For it is education that makes a man different from animals.

God had not stopped dealing his cruel blows. One day, as I was cooking dinner which was all but a few *rotis* and *dal* that mother had previously



brought from the bungalow, our next door neighbour, Sheela, came running. Sheela was the only considerate neighbour we had then. She managed to give me the dreadful news in one breath. I immediately rushed to the bungalow. On seeing mother's condition I fainted.

When I regained consciousness, I realised that I was surrounded by a group of women. Sheela was among them and it was she who managed to revive me from my faint.

Mother was cremated where father had been. There were a few sympathisers including some of our relatives. Emotions fought with each other within me. I was a volcano of rage about to erupt any moment. Memories of the moments I cherished with my family seemed to ease my immediate pain. I was confused about my future. I could not accept the fact that I had no one in the world close to me. It was these thoughts that proved what mother had

always said—"A family should never be taken for granted."

I had been reflecting on these thoughts and did not realise that I had reached home. The tears in my eyes blurred my vision. I could see however that what stood in place of my hut was a heap of ashes. I could not stand it anymore. I had no idea what had happened until Sheela told me. My father had not paid the rent for the land to the zamindar. Therefore, he had taken the case to court where the judge had given him permission to take back the land. This was shocking news to me.

I bent down and kissed the land that had once fed and sheltered me. Sheela took me to her hut and consoled me. When she saw that there was no change, she gave me dinner. When this had no effect on me either, she pulled out a chest from underneath the *charpoy* and unlocked it. Among its contents was a bunch of letters. She took out one that bore a recent date. It was from her brother who worked in a newspaper press in Bombay. He had written to inquire if Sheela knew



of anyone who was willing to do the cleaning, washing and cooking for the press officials. When Sheela suggested that I could go, I did not know how to react.

At first, my thoughts were focused on my ancestral land being in the village. But then I thought about the hard life I would have to face now that the last bit of land had been snatched away. Bombay was the city of my dreams. Father had gone there several times to submit his appeals for the reduction of revenue. Each time he came back, he brought *jalebis* and *ladoos*. At night, he would tell us about the towering buildings, the well-paved roads and the hustle and bustle.

The thought of father

kept me from going. At last, I swept aside these thoughts and worries and agreed to the suggestion. When Sheela's husband came in the evening, he promised to drop me off at the station. When I inquired about the money for the ticket, he told me not to worry and showed me the hefty bundle of money he had earned by selling vegetables in the market.

I spent that night pondering over the sudden change in my luck and decided that life was not so cruel after all. The next morning, I bathed, went to where my parents' were cremated and after spending some time praying for their blessings, hurried back. Sheela placed some money and a letter of identification in my

hands. When I protested about the money, she said that some day it would be of great use to me. Her husband took me on his bicycle to the station.

By the time we reached the station the train had arrived. I bought a ticket and immediately boarded the train. All I had that I could say belonged to me was a bundle of clothes, the coins that Sheela had given and the letter of identification.

As I turned my eyes to the land that had been my home for thirteen years, memories flooded my thoughts. I was on the verge of crying when the conductor tapped me on the shoulder and demanded to see the ticket. I showed it to him and he went away.

The air inside the compartment was smelly and humid. One had to expect this while travelling with about forty other passengers, most of whom were farmers.

I spent most of my time looking out the window. It was the same landscape that passed before my eyes. Children playing in fields waved with hands that showed signs of malnutrition. Women carrying sickles to cut the

crop raised their heads every now and then to glance at the train chug by. It took an hour to reach Bombay.

I heaved a sigh of relief as I got off the train. I took in a deep breath of the fresh air which was heavenly compared to the air that I had to inhale during the journey. But the surroundings were not as pleasant as the air. There were several overturned refuse bins, uncovered drains and flies hovering over the tracks.

I kept looking here and there when my eyes fell upon a coolie. I was hesitant for a moment but then strode over with a brave heart. I took out the letter and politely asked him whether he had any idea where the locality shown in the address was. The coolie nodded in reply and pointed in the direction opposite to me. Under a *banyan* tree sat a man smoking a *beedi*. On hearing his friend shouting he moved towards us, his bulky shape wavering with every step he took. The coolie started conversing with him in sign language. That meant he was deaf and dumb. The man stuck out his hand for the letter and after reading the

address, he signalled to me to follow him.

He made his way to a line of rickshaws. Apparently, he was a rickshaw driver. His charge was quite reasonable so I agreed to it. The driver had to stop at a few places to ask passers-by for more directions about the address. I spent most of my time looking at the buildings. They were true to what my father had told me about them. We entered the area around the locality; the surroundings seemed duller. Slum children played on the roads and

beggars were sleeping on the sidewalks.

By the time we reached the locality, I was famished. I paid the driver and he left. Upon seeing some people who looked as if they had been aroused from a deep slumber, I approached them and showed them the address. They pointed to a tiny house within an enclosed wall.

The gate was unlocked. It made a squeaking noise when I opened it. There were two children, a boy and a girl, playing with sand. One look at me and they scampered off inside. I waited for a



response. I did not have to wait for long since a short man in his mid-thirties came up to the doorway and looked curiously at me. I took out the letter and gave it to him. He read it quickly and invited me inside. He called his wife who was short like him. He gave the letter to her and she read it with joy. She left the room and returned with a plate full of biscuits and other tasty edibles. I took a few and pulled up a chair. The biscuits tasted like the ones father used to bring home. I used to nibble on them and keep them aside after one nibble each day. That way they lasted for a long time.

Yet these lacked the splendour of the biscuits given by father. Besides, if these people could afford them, what trouble would I have? Sheela's brother asked me about the village, the folk, the revenue and everything else that came to his mind. Then he got down to business. I would have to clean the dishes, wipe the floor—all the chores required from a typical servant. When I inquired about housing, he told me about a vacant room just close by. He promised me that the rent would easily

fit in with my wages. He allowed me to stay in his house for the night. In the next few days I got acquainted with the surroundings, my employers and the cook. My wages were quite reasonable and the room was good enough for me.

To this day, I am grateful for the help both, Sheela and her brother gave me. They were my true benefactors. The degree of their magnanimity was yet to multiply. As years passed by, they helped me fight my illiteracy and I slowly mastered Hindi. I even got a job in the press in which I had worked as a servant.

In those days, the youth were taking an active role in the fight against the British. They observed *satyagraha* on the advice of Gandhiji, practised boycott and had to face the *lathis* of the police. The press played a major role in this struggle. They inspired and captivated the youth by publishing articles on different aspects of the freedom struggle. My job as a journalist was safe as long as the British stayed. I had to risk my life several times to get 'the inside story'. There was this one incident that

caught me off guard.

One day, as I was returning home from the press, a peaceful boycott was being observed by many school and college students. Almost immediately, the police came and warned the students before charging. But the students did not heed the warning. A *lathi*-charge followed. Fate had decreed that I should be caught in this. For a minute, everything was chaotic. Suddenly, I was struck on the head and I fell unconscious.

When I regained consciousness, I was gazing at a white ceiling. I looked round and saw numerous people in pain. I deduced that I was lying in a hospital. A nurse, seeing that I was awake, called the doctor. I tried to get up, but he prevented me from doing so. He pointed to the tubes. When I asked him how I had got there, the doctor said that a middle-aged man had brought me. I asked for his name. The doctor explained that the man did not want his name to be disclosed. It was then I realised that I was hungry. The nurse brought some refreshments. She also brought a note. It read, "Dear Anand, I admire

Your work and it is with
O God's grace that I have
U come in your way even
R though it was for a short
time. Gurudev."

★

P (So far, the story has
A been told by Anand. It is
G 1948 now and the author
E would like to intervene and
S narrate the rest of the story
from his point of view.)

★

When Anand was discharged, he moved heaven and earth to find out who Gurudev was. Unfortunately, his efforts proved futile. But he took heart and continued his work of inspiring youth. One day the situation went out of hand. A group of women led by a few men were staging a peaceful protest against the unjust actions against women. It so happened that within a stone's throw from the scene of protest was a police station. The police took no time in arriving and without warning, started firing. Luckily, only a few died.

Anand took advantage of the opportunity. He wrote fiery articles and started collecting signatures of the local people against the police. The incident reached the ears of some officials who decided it was time to

take matters in their hands.

Anand was arrested and tried on the charge of sedition. He was put in jail along with some of his colleagues. But he did not remain there for long. On the fourth day of his arrest, he was released on a bail of one thousand rupees. He was told that it had been paid by a middle-aged gentleman who did not wish his name to be disclosed. Anand did not take long to realise that this was the same Gurudev who had taken him to the hospital. Anand decided to pack all his belongings and leave for Delhi. In Delhi, he acquired a job in a prestigious school as an English teacher with the help of his associates living there.

Years passed by. British rule had ended. India was free at last. Jawaharlal Nehru was first India's Prime Minister. Anand was now the principal of the best school in Delhi. His friendly nature endeared him to everyone he met. But the most surprising event of his life was yet to come.

It was midnight and Anand was returning home in his car. On the way, he stopped by his wife's *samadhi*. He decided to say a prayer for his wife before retiring for the day. He bent down at the foot of the memorial stone and folded his hands to pray. When he finished, he stood up and walked away.

Before he opened the car-door, he turned round



for a last glimpse. He was dumbstruck. There was an aged gentleman with a flowing beard and a smile on his face standing by the memorial. Unhesitatingly Anand ran to the spot. By the time he got there the man had vanished. He happened to look down and found a note lying on the ground. There was only a single word on it, 'Gurudev'.

★

Anand had quite forgotten the entire incident a few days later. He was attending a conference of principals from all over the country. He sat in the first row. Old age had crept upon him and boredom was slowing him down. His eyes fell on a portrait on the wall opposite him. He was taken by surprise. The image was that of the gentleman he had seen a few days ago at his wife's *samadhi*. It was a picture of Gurudev. Meanwhile, the speaker was concluding his speech with the following lines, "Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore left this world in 1941. There on that wall, hangs a portrait of him that clearly defines the virtues he represented—honesty, generosity and friendship."



LIFE RETURNS TO EARTH



Story:
Disha Rupayana (14)
Choithram School,
Indore
Illustrations:
Beejee

ROALD lay on his deathbed and remembered the day when the bombs had exploded all around and he had tried to escape from them. It had all started when the Lagrian sent to the doomed planet, Earth, returned. He told his fellow Lagrians, that he had sown the seeds of hatred, anger and suspicion on Earth. This had multiplied in time resulting in nuclear wars which had destroyed the silly beings on Earth. Now it was fit for the Lagrians to live on as it was barren, dark and

gloomy, and it orbited the sun with clock-work monotony.

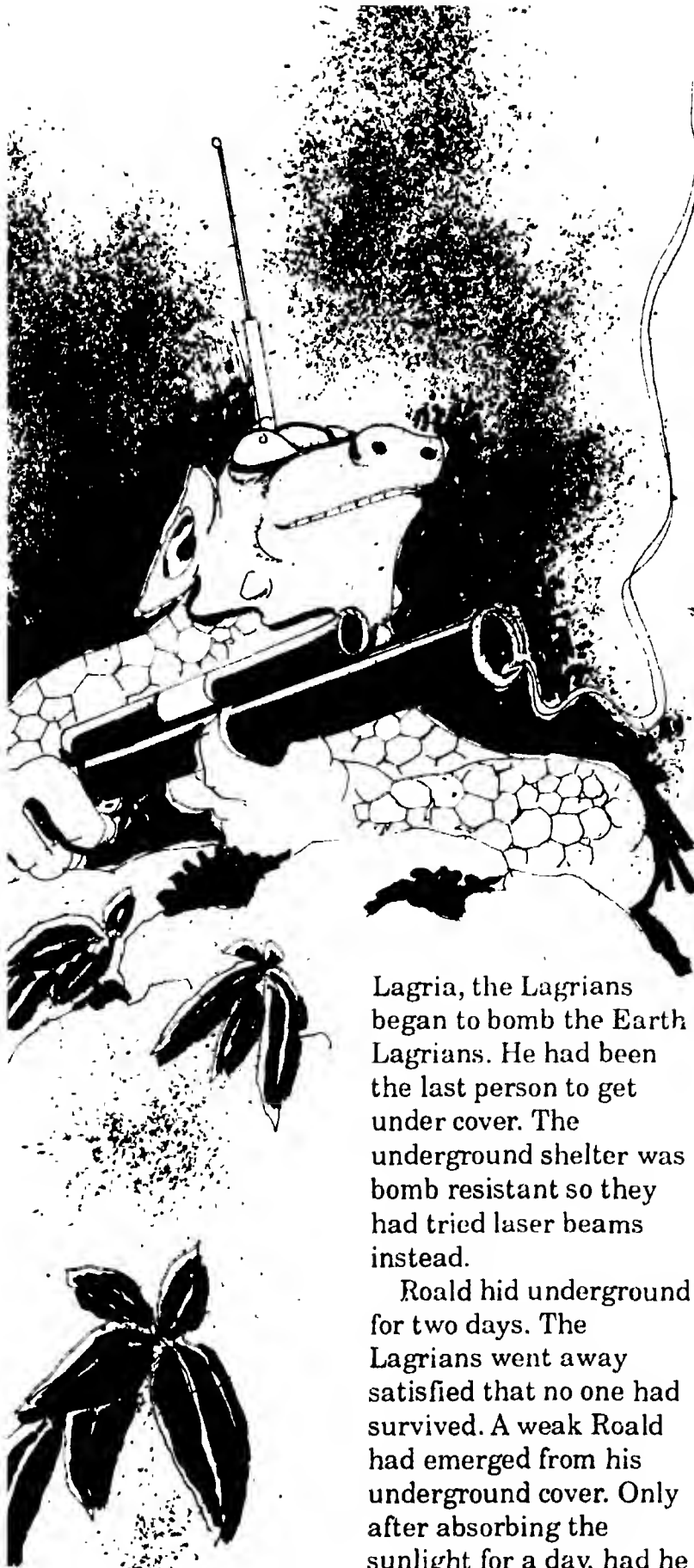
He, Roald, was a member of the first group to be sent to Earth. Many more groups followed. The planet was fit to live on for the inhabitants from Lagria. The seeds of hatred, anger, suspicion had died with the inhabitants of Earth.

Life on Earth was very pleasant according to Lagrian standards as they needed only sunlight to live.

One day the Earth Lagrians had woken up to find their lives changed forever. It had rained

during the night and everywhere there were signs of life. The Earth Lagrians wanted to go back to Lagria as the other life form could destroy them. But Roald had been different. He could see colours which was an ability the Lagrians didn't have. Moreover, he could admire beauty and he liked it on Earth. He had not wanted to go back to Lagria.

Meanwhile the population in Lagria had increased, leaving no place for the Earth Lagrians. So, to prevent them from returning to



Lagria, the Lagrians began to bomb the Earth Lagrians. He had been the last person to get under cover. The underground shelter was bomb resistant so they had tried laser beams instead.

Roald hid underground for two days. The Lagrians went away satisfied that no one had survived. A weak Roald had emerged from his underground cover. Only after absorbing the sunlight for a day, had he

felt stronger. The Earth had become barren again due to the effect of the bombs and laser beams.

A nuclear radiation leak had however destroyed Lagria. Slowly, with time, the Earth began to regain its beauty. Changes had come in Roald too. He did not need just sunlight to survive. His antennae had disappeared. He began to feel emotions and hunger. He became more and more human.

He discovered and invented. He led an absolutely wonderful life. There had been only one sorrow. He had no companion.

One night he had heard a noise. He went to investigate and discovered another human Lagrian like himself.

They had offspring. The offspring, in turn, discovered and invented, and Earth was again full of life. There was peace and harmony.

Roald thought with pleasure that a human Lagrian had returned to Earth its life.

The next day his sons found him dead with a peaceful smile on his face, as if he was happy to return life to where it belonged.

Getting to know Swapnasundari



Supriti Sethi (15)
uru Harkrishan Public School
New Delhi
Photograph courtesy:
Klron Pasricha

I *T was a bright and shiny day when I met the renowned dancer, Swapnasundari, at her house in South Delhi. A gifted dancer, she has received many awards for her remarkable performances—the Delhi Government Annual Award, Critic Circle of India Award and Nritya Sharda Award to name a few.*



Supriti: At what age did you start dancing?

Swapna: I started dancing when I was about four years old. It's a normal practice in South Indian households to train girls in fine arts. I was put into a dance school. My training did not start with dance but music. I was taught vocal music at home by my grandmother. When I could walk properly, I joined the dance school to learn Bharata Natyam.

Supriti: Where did your schooling take place?

Swapna: My father had a transferable job so my schooling was very irregular. I would attend one school for two to two and a half years and then when my father was transferred, we would shift and I would go to a new school. Amongst the places where I studied are Madras, Vishakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Pune, Bombay and Delhi.

Supriti: What are your mother's and father's names?

Swapna: My mother's name is Sarala and my father's name is Dr. Rao. Because mine is a South Indian family, the name of the village is attached to my parents' name. So,

my father's full name is Vakkalanka Kameshwar Rao and my mother's Vakkalanka Sarala Rao.

Supriti: Was dancing a family profession or were you the first one to tread the path?

Swapna: Dancing was not the profession of my family. My grandfather was an engineer, my father a doctor and all my uncles were either engineers or lawyers. There was no professional dancer in our family. My mother was a professional singer in South Indian films. After her marriage, she stopped singing professionally and took on regular jobs as a music composer, first at Gemini Studios at Madras and later on with the Government of India in Delhi. It was my mother who motivated me to take up dance because people of her generation did not have the opportunity to do so professionally. So when she found that I was showing a talent for dance, she encouraged me to develop it and become a professional dancer.

Supriti: What inspired you to become a dancer?

Swapna: The inspiration really came from watching a lot of

famous dancers on TV. You may not believe this, but I watched Yamini Krishnamurthy when I was seven years old and then I used to watch Vyjayantimala and Kamala Laxman. When I saw these very successful, glamorous dancers, I used to dream of being like them. My whole family, particularly my mother, supported me. My mother played a very active role in shaping me as an artiste.

Supriti: What do you think is the right age to start dance lessons?

Swapna: The earlier the better because when you are small, there are fewer distractions and you are able to concentrate better. As one gets older, whatever the person is learning as a hobby takes a very small place in their lives. So I'd say that the right age is around 5 or 6 years.

Supriti: What was your dance teacher's name?

Swapna: There were many teachers from whom I've learnt different dances. Amongst the foremost are the late Guru Kalyanasundaram, who taught me Bharata Natyam, Guru

Dakshinamurty in Delhi, and Guru Adiyar Laxmanan of Kalakshetra. I studied *abhinaya* in Bharata Natyam style from Kalanidhi Narayanan. Guru Pasumarthy Seetaramya and Guru Vempatichina Sathyam taught me Kuchipudi. I learnt Vilasini Natyam from Smt. M. Laxmi Narayana. I continue to learn whenever I get the opportunity and I find that there are teachers who can give me fresh inputs.

Supriti: When was your first stage performance?

Swapna: I started taking part in school competitions and gave various performances at school at an early age. My first public appearance as a professional dancer was at the age of 14 in Delhi.

Supriti: What are your hobbies?

Swapna: I have many hobbies, and one of them is reading. I can read anything—classics, newspapers, paperbacks. I like to read Indian poetry in English, Hindi, Sanskrit or Telugu. I'm fond of gardening and I like to plan my garden. I like to watch tennis for it relaxes me. Though I'm

not a film buff, I try to see some good movies. I also sing and do audio cassettes but not as a hobby. I do it commercially.

Supriti: What are the differences between various types of classical dances?

Swapna: Bharata Natyam has a lot of geometrical progression. Kuchipudi is very dramatic and exuberant for it is in a story-telling form. Kathak lays emphasis on *chakkars* or spins and on a lot of rapid footwork which is called *tatkar*. Manipuri, on the other hand, is lyrical and very soft and is meant as a form of worship. Kathakali is dramatic and the dancers have very exaggerated make-up, highly stylized movements. Vilasini Natyam is very feminine and graceful and has an elaborate form of *abhinaya*. For every dance, the background music, the style of singing, the language and instruments used are different.

Supriti: Do you have any regrets in life?

Swapna: No, none. I'm happy that people accepted me at a very early age and I feel I could do more in life.

Supriti: If not a dancer what would you have become today?

Swapna: I would have done medicine, for my father is also a doctor. He always wanted one of his three children to become a doctor. Unfortunately, none of us took up this profession. My sister is a journalist abroad, my brother is a scientist and I'm a dancer.

Supriti: Can you tell us about the most memorable incident of your life?

Swapna: There are many memorable moments but this one is the most memorable of them all. I was performing in the Kamani auditorium as Yashoda, holding Krishna in her arms and singing a lullaby to him. At one point of this composition, Yashoda puts her child down and then holding his finger teaches him how to walk. Then she lets go of his finger and starts calling him, using gestures. While I was thus gesturing, a little child actually got up from the audience and walked right on to the stage and started following me! This was about 10 years ago, but I still remember it for

it shows that the power of *abhinaya* can affect anybody regardless of one's age.

Supriti: What are your future plans?

Swapna: As long as I'm blessed with good

health, mental alertness, willingness to learn and eagerness to improve, I would like to keep on dancing. And as long as people like to see me, I would continue to dance.

In future I might do choreography, set up an institution or I may write books on my experiences. I'll focus my energy on singing when I retire from dancing.



THE DARK AGE

Purva Upasak (14)
Cholthram School, Indore
Illustrations: Nilabho

*Why of all ages,
Did God make the 'teen' age?
When elders scold
While you only scowl,
When others tease,
And you have to say 'Cheese'
When, as you try explaining your problems,
You are ordered to keep your mouth shut.
When no one understands you,
And you feel inexplicably alone.
When your desires spring up
But they have to be killed.
When you are confused,
And there is no one to help you out.
When you wish to be left on your own
But all attack you with a 'piece of their minds'.
When you want friends,
But find no one.
Summed up in a phrase,
All I can say
Is that
Teenage is a
DARK AGE.*

Ankit Agrawal, Class VI
St. George School,
New Delhi

Teacher: What happened to your homework?

Student: I made a paper plane out of it and somebody hijacked it.

Priest: Son, do you pray before you go to bed?

Boy: My mother does that for me.

Priest: What does she say?

Boy: Thank God! At last you are in bed.

Teacher: Madan, give me a sentence starting with "I".

Madan: I is...

Teacher: No, you should not say "I is" but say "I am".

Madan: All right, I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.

Sonu Gupta (11)
New Delhi

Teacher: At your age I could name all the Presidents and in proper order.

Student: But, there had been only three or four Presidents when you were a student.

Judge: Tell me the truth. Did you rob this man of his gold? If you lie, you will go to hell.

Accused: Your honour, if I tell the truth, I will have to go to jail.

Riddles

1. What do frogs drink?
2. How can you predict a ghost's future?

2. Which room do you eat?

3. Mushroom

horroroscope

2. By looking into its

1. Croak-a-cola

Answers

Vedashree Khambete (15)
St. Columba School, Mumbai
Illustrations: Pijush Dutta

*A lot of noise,
A loud explosion,
Ear-piercing music,
Sound pollution;
Loud rap and fast disco,
What do we need?
Just a slow,
River's flow,
Gentle feelings,
Emotions and memories
And above all...
... Silence ...*

Rumeet Kaur (14)
Guru Harkrishan Public School, New Delhi

*Memories are meant to be shared
Over the years they are reared
They penetrate the mind by various means
We invite them through photographs
Or through other things
They may be lovely
Or may be sad
They are always a part of
Experiences we have had.*

**Story: Divya Nair (12),
Delhi Public School,
Noida**

**Illustrations:
Ajit Narayan**

A MILD breeze blew steadily, brushing the faces of the twins, Shamili and Shalini.

"This place gives me the creeps," Shalini muttered.

The twins were standing in front of an old mansion on the outskirts of their town, Ulhasnagar. They had newly moved to the town.

On the first day, their neighbours had told them never to go to the mansion at night. On asking why, they had been told that it was haunted by the ghost of a Mrs. Rao. The woman had been very rich and had married a poor man, who wanted all her money, and had killed her for it. They were also told that many weird sounds came from the mansion and many people had been driven out from there by a strange looking figure. Shamili had asked

for more details but nobody knew more than that.

A couple of days later, the twins had decided to explore the mansion. They had planned to do it at night. At 13 they were clever, daring and astute.

"This place does seem spooky. The whole mansion is covered with moss and it's just impossible..." Shamili was suddenly interrupted by an eerie, shrill shriek of a woman.

The twins looked at each other, amazed. They

ran in the direction of the scream. It had come from the backyard. The place was overgrown with bougainvillea and wild roses. It was empty.

"The sound did come from here, but where did the person go?" asked Shamili.

"Don't forget we are in a haunted mansion," said Shalini, smiling nervously.

"Let's go inside the mansion and find out."

The door opened with a creak as if groaning at being woken from sleep. A bat flew out.

The twins marched into the mansion and as soon as they entered, the door closed with a bang. "Must be the wind," said Shamili.

"But outside there isn't even a breeze!" exclaimed Shalini.

"Forget it. Let's see what awaits us ahead," said Shamili.

Before them were two staircases that met halfway from where another staircase led to the rooms on the top. To their left there were three rooms.

"Mrs. Rao does not seem to have had many expensive things. This house is ordinary, except that it is made of wood," said Shalini, going through the rooms.

In the third room the twins saw many photographs on the walls. One was of a beautiful lady. In one corner of the photograph was a scribbled signature with a message "To Mrs. Rao, with best wishes".

"Oh boy! Shamili, Mrs. Rao was really gorgeous—if this is Mrs. Rao," exclaimed Shalini admiring the photograph.

"Yes, poor lady, I don't know why that guy killed her," said Shamili. Just then, they heard a spine-chilling scream. The twins jumped. An eerie stillness followed.

"What next?" asked Shamili tensely.

"Let's continue searching the house. Maybe we will get some clue," said Shalini.

The twins searched the rooms but could not find any clue to the scream. They decided to return home. Suddenly there was a flash, and a gorgon appeared. In a hushed but stern tone, she said, "Go...go away..."

The twins stood stupefied for a minute. Then Shalini picked up courage and dashed after the terrible looking woman but she had disappeared.

"Shali, where did the gorgon go?" Shamili

questioned.

"I... I don't know. She seems to have disappeared into thin air," whispered Shalini, still staring at the wall in front of her. "I say, this place is haunted," she said.

"I don't think so. Before the figure vanished, I couldn't see a thing because it was surrounded by what seemed like a thick layer of fog. That gave her enough time to ...maybe... go through a secret passage," Shamili said excitedly.

"You may be right, Shamili, but let's go home now. I am feeling scared and sleepy," said Shalini.

Back home, they got into bed without even changing their clothes. Next morning they woke up to a surprise. Their cousins had come for a vacation.

After breakfast the twins told their cousins—Veenu, Pallav and Vinay—about their adventure at the mansion the previous night.

"Let's go to the mansion tonight," said Vinay excitedly. He was 14, Pallav 11 and Veenu 8.

"We'll take flashlights too," said Shalini.

At 10 o'clock, the children sneaked out of

the house, sure that the elders were in deep slumber. They reached the mansion and entered. Again the door banged shut. They decided to search the rooms the twins had not covered the previous night.

"Let's first find out if there is a secret passage in the room where Shamili and I saw the gorgon," Shalini suggested.

"Wouldn't it be better if we divided the rooms amongst ourselves? We will be able to cover more in less time," Veenu suggested.

"Good idea! I will go and find out how many rooms there are," Vinay said and ran upstairs. After a while, he came back and reported that there were a total of 15 rooms. They quickly decided which rooms each of them should cover.

Vinay's room was carpeted and the carpet looked new. He decided to check under the carpet. It took all his strength to roll back the heavy carpet. He felt all over the floor with his hands, but could not find a crack or a lining or something which could prove that there was a secret passage underneath. He spread the carpet back over the floor and dusted his

hands. He looked around and saw a vase of plastic flowers which too did not look very old. He was puzzled.

Shamili, meanwhile, found a crumpled piece of paper. She picked it up and was about to read it when someone screamed. She put the paper in her pocket and rushed out of the room and found Shalini and Vinay running upstairs. She caught up with them and asked, "Who was it?"

"It sounded like Veenu," Vinay said tensely. They reached the room and heard Pallav saying, "Over here, *Bhaiya*." In the room Veenu sat crying hysterically.

"What happened, Veenu?" asked Vinay.

"Th...the...there," Veenu pointed to a window and started crying again. Shamili put her arms round her, and consoled her. "A horrible face appeared at the window," Veenu said. It said, 'Death if you don't go away.' I was terrified and screamed. The face disappeared. Oh! please let's go home. I feel terrible here."

Everyone agreed.

Next day the children woke up to an overcast sky, with Veenu running a high fever. The doctor was called. He advised rest

and prescribed some medicines. The twins and their cousins spent the day indoors looking after Veenu.

The following day Veenu was better but she decided to stay in. The other four wanted to shop. By midday they discovered they were hungry. They found a small restaurant and sat down at an empty table. A waiter came to take their orders and went away. An elderly woman sitting next to the hotel owner's desk was enjoying the classical music being played on a tape-recorder at a low volume. When she saw the children, she gave them a faint smile. The children smiled back.

The old lady said, "Children, don't roam around in the night. It is dangerous. Children are being kidnapped again here."

"Again?" Pallav asked.

"Yes," she said. She took out an album and showed them the picture of a young lady. "This is my best friend's daughter. I was very attached to her and she to me. Her father died when she was very young. She was kidnapped the day Mrs. Rao died. Her body has not been found. Her mother is out of her mind



with grief. After that, a lot of kidnappings took place. The kidnapped children were found dead with organs missing. For a couple of years there were no kidnappings. But now it has begun again," the old lady lamented.

Just then the owner of the restaurant came in. "Oh Ma! you have started again." Then turning to the children he said, "Your orders have been served."

The next day the children went for a picnic.

They enjoyed themselves. After lunch, the children set out to play. While playing, Shamili happened to put her hands in the pocket of her jeans. She felt the crumpled piece of paper and took it out. The note read, "Spit out the tea and switch to coffee—Black Widow." She called out to her cousins and her twin.

"Where did you get it from?" they asked.

"I remember, I found it in one of the rooms at the

mansion. When Veenu screamed, I put it in my pocket and forgot all about it."

The children could not figure out the meaning of the words in the note. "One thing is clear. There is no ghost in the mansion," said Shalini. "Veenu, you can relax," she said. "The face you saw was a man in a mask."

"Ghost or no ghost, I am not going to step into that mansion again," Veenu said vehemently.

Y "Listen, Shamili, you said you had found this paper in the mansion. That means something unlawful is going on in the mansion. They are playing ghost so as to prevent people from going to the mansion. They can carry on their activities unhindered," said Vinay.

On the way back the children were quiet. When their car stopped at a red light, Shalini saw a familiar face inside the car parked alongside. The lady was perspiring profusely and looked nervous. When she saw Shalini staring at her, she rolled up the window of her car. The light turned green, and the vehicles moved on. Shalini wondered why the lady's face seemed familiar. Veenu said something and Shalini forgot all about the face.

When they reached home, they found police in their neighbourhood. Mrs. Lal was crying and Mr. Lal, looking strained and weary, was being questioned by the cops.

"Their little boy, Prateek, has been kidnapped. His maid had taken him for a walk. That careless woman met a friend of hers and left the five-year-old child alone in the park. When she finished talking to her

friend, he was missing," one of their neighbours informed them.

Mr. and Mrs. Nair stayed with the Lals and the cousins went back home. There they discussed the kidnapping and then the secret of the mansion.

Suddenly, Shalini remembered the face in the car. The face was Mrs. Rao's! She told the others about it.

"How can that be? She is dead!" exclaimed Vinay.

"But I saw her with my own eyes. It was not just my imagination," insisted Shalini.

Shamili was deep in her thoughts. "What are you thinking, *Didi*?" questioned Pallav.

"Sh...sh..."

There was silence. Then an excited Shamili astonished everybody by saying, "Mrs. Rao is not dead."

"What do you mean?" asked Vinay.

"Mrs. Rao is alive, safe and sound. Remember that old lady in the restaurant? She said that the day Mrs. Rao had died, her friend's daughter had been kidnapped and her body has not yet been found. That girl, if you remember, was physically similar to Mrs. Rao."

"I know what you

mean, Shamili," said Shalini. "You think that instead of Mrs. Rao that girl was murdered. Since she resembled Mrs. Rao, and had been found in her mansion, everybody thought Mrs. Rao had been murdered."

"But why should they kill another girl? What would they gain by doing that?" asked Vinay.

"That is what we have to find out. But I have a hunch that something went amiss that made Mr. and Mrs. Rao bankrupt. To get over this bankruptcy, they plotted to kill a girl resembling Mrs. Rao. They made the whole world believe that it was Mrs. Rao who had died. Then they started kidnapping little children for their organs. You remember the old lady told us that the kidnapped children were found dead with certain missing organs. The organs must have been removed for money. They stopped this crime for some time and now they are at it again."

Everybody gasped with horror. This meant that Prateek was in the clutches of the criminals. They had to save him. But what about Veenu? She did not want to go to the mansion again. Then Vinay suggested, "Pallav,

Shamili, Shalini and I will go to the mansion. Venu, you stay here. If we are not back in two hours, bring help, okay?"

The four cousins headed for the mansion. The door would not open. Pallav said, "A big mansion like this cannot have just one entrance. There must be more. At least an open window."

They went round the mansion. They did find a window ajar but, it was at a height they could not reach. On searching, they found a wooden crate in the backyard. Vinay, who was the tallest, climbed on it and opened the window. Then he climbed in and helped the others.

"Now what?" asked Shalini.

"I saw a fairly new carpet and some plastic flowers in the room I had searched that day. Something seems fishy there. We should start searching that place," suggested Vinay. So they all trooped into that room.

Vinay tried to move the flower vase but it did not move. On a hunch, he moved it round and the middle portion of the carpet caved in. The children removed the carpet and saw that beneath it was a secret passage.

"So, this vase was a

device to open the secret passage," exclaimed Shalini.

Hurriedly they all climbed down and Vinay pulled the trap door shut. Ahead of them was a short tunnel which turned to the right. They walked through it, and came to a flight of stairs. They quietly tiptoed down and kept on moving straight. Before them was a big door which was slightly open, enough for the cousins to peep through. They found that there was a big table inside, surrounded by chairs. A few people were sitting there. At the head sat a man with a woman by his side. "That is Mrs. Rao," whispered Shalini, "and that man must be Mr. Rao."

The cousins strained their ears and heard Mr. Rao saying to his acquaintances, "Ranga, when will the trucks and vans be coming?"

"They will be here in about two hours."

"They should be here at the appointed time. You know we have to move tonight," said Mrs. Rao.

"Don't worry, madam. What about those children we have kidnapped?" asked Ranga.

Mr. Rao's face lit up in a devilish smile and he

said, "We will take them along."

Without waiting to hear more, Vinay told the others, "You three go and find Prateek. More children have been kidnapped along with him. They may have been hidden in the same room. Be quick."

"Okay, *Bhaiya*."

Shalini, Shamili and Pallav went back through the tunnel, opened the trap door and climbed out. They went from room to room but couldn't find the kidnapped children. Finally, in the 'gorgon' room, Pallav said, "Oh! we will never be able to find them." He leaned against a wall, dejected. Wonders of wonders! he was thrown back—the wall slid open.

"So that is how the gorgon disappeared," cried Shamili. They picked up Pallav, who was now grinning. The wall opened into a small alcove with a door. The door led to a room. Inside were Prateek and other children, all tied up with ropes. They looked up in alarm at the arrival of the newcomers. Shalini told them to be quiet, and quickly untied their ropes with Shamili and Pallav's help.

Shamili looked around the room and spotted a

Y red button and pressed it. A door gave way on the far side of the room.

U Inside were many wooden crates, boxes and a huge freezer. One box was open. In it were a

P large number of packets filled with white powder. Drugs? Probably.

G Shamili closed the box and opened the freezer. To her utter horror, it was full of human organs. She stifled her scream, as did the others.

Shamili quickly closed the freezer and turned to another door. She pulled it open and heard a surprised exclamation. It was Vinay. They were back to where they had started.

Unfortunately, somebody had heard Vinay exclaim. A burly man threw open the door, and was startled to see the children. He quickly regained his composure and called the others.

"This is the last thing we wanted," thought Shamili.

Mr. Rao came forward and the children were rounded up.

"So, you are the kids who have been pestering us. You are very courageous, very smart but not too smart for us. Pests! I think, you know too much to be left alive.

You shall pay for your smartness. Bring all of them in and tie them up," barked Mr. Rao.

The children were tied and thrown inside the room. Then Mr. Rao and his gang entered, and sat on the chairs.

"Do you know what we are going to do with you? We are going to take out your organs. You seem healthy!" Mr. Rao's face again lit up with a deadly smile.

Shamili glanced at her watch. It was nearly two hours since they had come. "Why doesn't Veenu come with help?" thought Shamili. They would have to somehow buy enough time. "Mrs. Rao, we thought you were dead," Shamili said aloud.

"I, dead—huh? Well, my little girl, it was not I who died. It was another girl, who looked like me, who died."

"Why did you kill her?" asked Pallav.

Mr. Rao gave a warning look to his wife but Mrs. Rao said, "Oh there is no harm in telling these kids. After all, they are going to die shortly."

Then, she turned to Shamili and said, "The whole idea was mine. You see, we used to bet at the races. We won initially.

Later on, we began to

lose, and became bankrupt. Then we came in contact with 'Black Widow'—the mastermind—and started organ extraction from children. These we sold for huge sums of money. We stopped it for two or three years, and started drug peddling. The cops became suspicious and the 'Black Widow' ordered us to stop peddling drugs for a while. We have again gone back to the organ business."

Shalini exclaimed, "So, that is what the note meant. What was it? Oh, yes, it was 'Spit out the tea and switch to coffee'."

"Clever children," mocked Mrs. Rao.

"I hope all your doubts are cleared," Mr. Rao asked sarcastically.

"Just one thing more. How did the door close by itself?" asked Vinay.

"Oh, the door. That was easy. One of our men closed it by remote control. And that scream you heard was from a tape recorder," Mrs. Rao said.

Just then, a man came running into the room. "The police are here. They have surrounded the whole mansion and they have also captured our trucks."

Mr. Rao began to bark



choice. Mr. Rao led his gang out. Veenu, who was watching all this from a corner, quietly picked up a stone and threw it at Mr. Rao. He cried out and his grip over Vinay loosened. This was the opportunity the police were looking for.

★

The next morning, the children woke up late but refreshed. As usual Mrs. Nair called everybody to breakfast. When everybody had settled down, the twins' father said, "So, this is what you've been upto?"

The children were sure that they were going to be lectured. But, Mr. Nair smiled and said, "I am proud of you all. See, all the newspapers have flashed the story of your bravery. The police have even captured the 'Black Widow' and you are going to get a reward of Rs.50000."

"Uncle, what are they going to do with the culprits?" Veenu asked, innocently.

"They are going to give them sweets," said Pallav teasingly.

"Oh, really? Then I would also like to be with them," Veenu said smartly.

And everyone laughed.

orders, "Forget the goods. Take these children as hostages and escape."

With the children as hostages, and a revolver in his hands, Mr. Rao opened the door and shouted, "If any one of you moves, these children will be sent to heaven. Put down your revolvers quickly."

The police had no

Answers

Asterix and Tintin—A Quiz.

(See page 42)



Asterix

1. Both of them were given twelve tasks to complete which they accomplished, although Asterix received a little help from Obelix.
2. Stonehenge ('Asterix in Spain').
3. He is the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra. She had sent the baby to Asterix so that he would be safe from Brutus, who was trying to do away with him as he was Caesar's only heir.
4. Obelix, while climbing the Sphinx, had accidentally slipped and held on to its nose. The

nose, under Obelix's weight, broke and fell with Obelix to the ground.

5. They have translated Asterix from French to English.
6. Mistletoe.
7. Don Quixote.
8. Asterix spent a night at the same stable in Bethlehem in which Lord Jesus was born ('Asterix and the Black Gold').
9. Thompson and Thomson and Laurel and Hardy in 'Asterix in Belgium' and 'Obelix and Co.' respectively.
10. Unhygienix's wife's name is Bacteria.

Tintin

1. The League of Nations.
2. Allan.
3. Marlinspike Hall.
4. 'Tintin and the Cigars of the Pharaoh'.
5. 'Tintin and the Picaros'.
6. They tied the wallet to their waistcoats with rubberband.
7. Leslie Lonsdale Cooper and Michael Turner.
8. 'Tintin and Red Rackham's Treasure'.
9. 'Phostlite', named after himself, Decimus Phostle.
10. The Abominable Snowman or Yeti.

COLORFUL COLLECTIONS

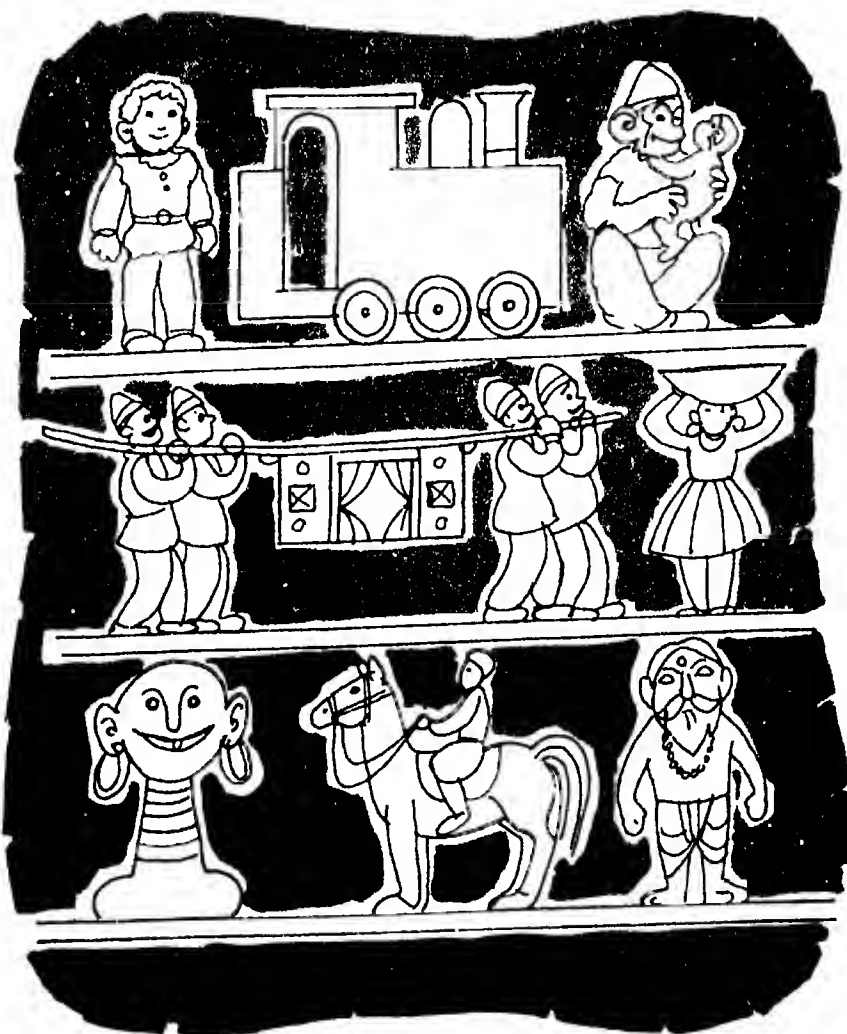
Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

YOU MAY have heard or read about toy training centres. Some persons run their own toymaking courses.

Some individuals make dolls or other toys as a hobby. They either sell them or keep them. Yet others collect dolls or toys wherever they go. Some buy the latest toys, and some others of a certain period. Yet others collect books on dolls and toys.

You too can make a collection. At home you may find some old or curious toys. Or the toys you make as a hobby. Keep them in a cabinet or arrange them on a shelf in your room. Or keep them together with the toys you once played with.



In November we have a handicrafts week. A variety of handmade things, including folk toys, are displayed in the cities.

At these handicraft exhibitions you may spot a man or a woman making clay or bamboo toys. Do watch how their fingers shape ordinary material into pretty things. Or how they colour or clothe the toys.

Ah, a toy exhibition. Such displays are arranged from time to time, exhibiting folk or factory-made toys, period toys or toys found at a historical site. Interesting and instructive, these displays tell us something about the contemporary social life of the toys or about the country they come from.

Once a young woman exhibited in Delhi the toys she had bought in the streets. They were simple and inexpensive playthings like reed rattles and clay carts.

Sometimes there are special toy exhibitions. An exhibition of Indian dolls abroad, for example. Or of some other country's toys or puppets in India. Rightly are such exhibits called envoys extraordinary. They boost understanding between one country and

another.

Have you heard of toy banks? It is a scheme started by the Indian Government. It asks schools to set up toy collection centres or banks. Children donate the toys they do not need to these banks. The toys are sent to less fortunate children who cannot afford to buy any.

Sharing has its own joy. Imagine a poor child lying sick and sad. How happy he would feel if he suddenly got the gift of a doll or some other toy.

Sometimes the children of one country send gifts of toys to the children of another country. A few months back *Children's World* carried a write-up on the toys Indian children were sending to children in Cuba.

There are toy hospitals too. These are places where broken toys are mended.

Whole volumes have been written on toys and dolls. Apart from these there are stories and poems on playthings. Enid Blyton has written many such tales. *Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi is the story of a puppet.

Just as in fables birds and animals talk, in toy stories the dolls and other playthings act and speak.

Munshi Prem Chand's 'A Toy for Hamid' is a touching short story. It has some vivid descriptions of clay toys.

Grown-ups often use the word toy to mean something that only pleases kids. That is, a thing which, though attractive, is of no value. Another word they use in this sense is 'bauble'.

Khilona, meaning a toy, occurs in several Hindi and Urdu poems and songs to suggest a thing that merely amuses or is easily broken.

But children's poems always use the word in its true sense—of a thing that children love to play with. As a child in Priscilla Pointer's 'Toys' says:

*I've had a very happy
day,
Just full of fun and lots
of play.*



Story: Krishna
Narayan
Illustrations: Nilabho
Dhar Chowdhury

*Ismail Beg attacks
Kumbher. He is beaten
back and forced to flee. He
would have been
successful had Kunwar
Singh not been caught
leading the enemy into the
fort from an undefended
end. Raja Balwant Singh
orders that the traitor be
hanged. Janki Devi
pleads with Jai Singh to
save her son, and Kunwar
Singh is set free.*

Part 4

Senor Noronha began
life as Velasco Braganzer
Noronha. Born of poor
Portuguese parentage,
Velasco Noronha spent his
boyhood on the streets of
Oporto. At fifteen he
smuggled himself on
board a merchant vessel.
For the next five years he
sailed on various ships,
serving as bootblack,
cabin boy and coxswain.
The rough and tumble
at sea toughened Velasco
Noronha, fast converting
him from a boy into
to a man.

At last, Velasco

The Treasure of Kumbher



The penalty for jumping ship was severe—sixty days of working the oars, chained to the lower deck—so young Noronha fled inland, working his way along. At a time when men fought over every inch of land and every ear of corn, mercenaries were in great demand. Anyone who possessed a strong arm and a keen eye was welcome to join the fray. Noronha hired himself out to the Nawab of Buxar as the supervisor of his gun-casting works.

Noronha rose swiftly in the Nawab's employ. He was promoted to Captain of the guard, then to Superintendent of the arsenal. In truth, Noronha knew nothing of the nature of these tasks, but what he did not know he learned or improvised. His white skin and forceful personality saw him through the rest.

It was about this time that Velasco Noronha developed a hunger for money. He began by taking a commission on all purchases made for the armoury. He undertook the daily provisioning of the Nawab's troops, and made a tidy sum thereupon. He bought

lands around Buxar and cultivated indigo which he exported through hired agents. In the space of fifteen years, Velasco Noronha grew enormously rich.

At thirty-five, Noronha realised that money was not everything. He wanted to be more than merely a wealthy merchant. He wanted fame and power, and entry into the higher reaches of society. Therefore, Noronha put together an army of five hundred men and promoted himself to the rank of General. He set up his headquarters at Harchu and made known that his services were available—at a price.

Along the way, Velasco Braganzer Noronha became Senor Noronha.

★

Senor Noronha was seated in an armchair under the shade of the *neem* tree in front of his residence. His body was covered with a clean, white sheet. His face was profusely lathered; beside him his barber stropped his razor on the leather thong that hung from the tree. Senor Noronha, running his toes over the glossy Afghan hound at his feet, settled down to

enjoy his noonday shave.

The barber tautened the skin at his throat; at that moment the hound gave a yelp. Senor Noronha cracked open an eye. Four horsemen were coming through the gates into his courtyard. Two of them were his own guards. He did not recognise the other two, for the sun cast a shadow directly across their faces.

They came nearer and he saw that it was none other than Madhoji Sindhia himself, accompanied by his faithful lieutenant, Rana Khan. A sliver of ice coursed through Senor Noronha's spine. If Madhoji Sindhia was here to see him in person, then surely it must be on a matter of great importance.

It irritated him that their arrival had spoiled his pleasurable afternoon, and for a moment he considered asking them to wait until he had shaved, but refrained. Madhoji Sindhia might take it amiss, and it would not do to annoy him.

Senor Noronha gestured to his barber to wipe the lather off his face. He rose from the armchair, slipped on his velvet slippers and bowed

from the waist.

"To what do I owe the honour of this visit?" he asked. "But first, shall we go inside?"

He led them towards his vast, colonnaded house that gleamed white in the sun. The riders dismounted. They walked up the steps and stood on the marble verandah.

"You live well, indeed," said Madhoji Sindhia with a wry smile. His eyes ran over the silk drapes, the plump cushions, the bowls of fruit, the tigerskin on the floor.

"Some wine for the General?"

Madhoji Sindhia shook his head. "I must refuse, for I have little time. First, the purpose of my visit. I need your help against a dangerous enemy." He crossed over to a cushion and sat down. "I refer to that Afghan brigand, Ismail Beg."

Senor Noronha listened attentively. Madhoji Sindhia spoke slowly, and each word carried authority and precision. "Friend, you are aware of the anarchy that prevails around us. The Mughal power is becoming extinct. Petty adventurers like Ismail Beg have

begun to act like kings. It is obvious that if the land is to prosper, the Maratha flag must fly all over Hindustan."

Senor Noronha's first reaction was one of contempt. What cared he for the prosperity of Hindustan? He was no native chief to be swayed by loyalties of birth or caste! Like all mercenaries, he simply sold his services to the highest bidder.

"It is my aim to create an empire ruled by the Marathas," continued Madhoji Sindhia. "For this, it is necessary to cultivate and protect trusted allies. Raja Balwant Singh of Kumbher is one such ally. He is now in dire straits and needs protection against Ismail Beg."

"Ismail Beg attacked Kumbher a week ago," said Senor Noronha. "I understand he was routed by the king's army."

"Ismail Beg will strike again and with a larger force this time," said Madhoji Sindhia. He rose from his seat and paced the room. Rana Khan backed away to the wall respectfully.

"Unfortunately, the present times are bad for me and the Marathas. I

am sure you are aware of it," continued Madhoji Sindhia. "I cannot go to Kumbher's aid, much as I would like to do so. Senor Noronha, I request you to march to Kumbher and defend her on my behalf."

Senor Noronha did not like the proposal at all. He had just returned after a tiring foray into his dominions, and had no desire to move out again. Neither was he interested in furthering Madhoji Sindhia's political ambitions and play bodyguard to some petty king! He kept his face impassive.

"Times are bad everywhere, General," he said. "The peasantry is rebellious, and I have been unable to collect the dues from my lands this year. Part of my army is disbanded."

"I do not forget a favour," said Madhoji Sindhia as if he had not heard. "You shall be richly rewarded when the time comes."

"My men are otherwise engaged," said Senor Noronha. "It will be difficult for me to fight Balwant Singh's battles for him." It was a polite refusal.

There was a pause. "I wonder if our horses are

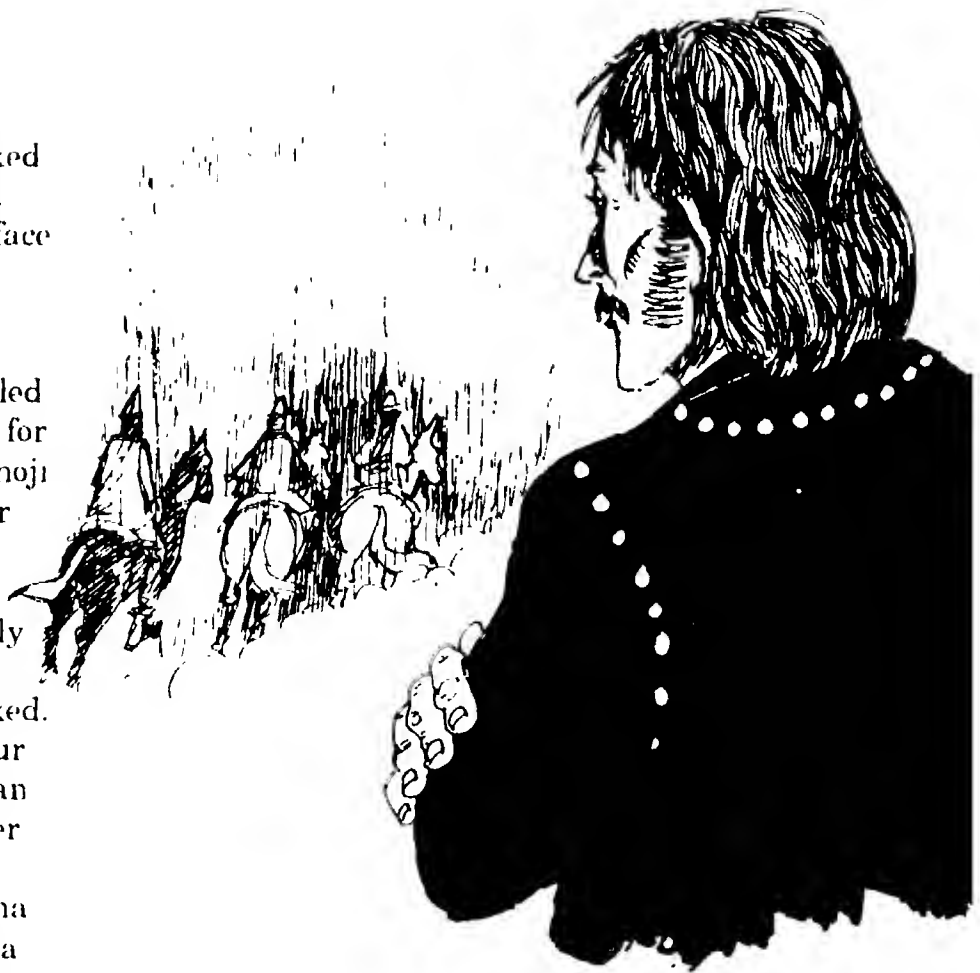
ready," said Madhoji Sindhia suddenly. He turned away and walked slowly down the steps. Rana Khan moved to face Senor Noronha. "You forget your limits," he said coldly. "Madhoji Sindhia has not travelled all this way to take no for an answer. What Madhoji desires, it shall be your privilege to execute."

Senor Noronha regarded the short, ugly man with scorn. "And what if I don't?" he asked.

"Then I shall slit your throat," said Rana Khan softly, drawing a dagger from the folds of his trousers. Senor Noronha flinched. He knew Rana Khan would not hesitate to carry out his threat. He looked out onto the courtyard. Madhoji Sindhia was cunningly keeping the guards busy with the horses. The fools had seen nothing!

Senor Noronha was angry for having fallen into such a simple trap, but did not show it. He looked down at the dagger, then at Rana Khan. "Put that away," he said. "Let me speak to your master." Together they descended the steps.

"It shall be as you desire," announced Senor Noronha to Madhoji



Sindhia. "I shall proceed to Kumbher to assist the king against Ismail Beg, or any other."

Madhoji Sindhia turned. He smiled, showing a mouthful of yellow teeth. "I knew I could depend on you, my friend. God be with you! My mind is now at rest. But," he added as he swung into the saddle, "I trust you will not go back upon your word, for the Marathas have a long arm, and a longer memory!"

Senor Noronha watched Madhoji Sindhia

and Rana Khan ride out of his residence. His brow furrowed in thought. The horses disappeared in the distance in a cloud of dust. Senor Noronha decided he would go to Kumbher. He would protect Kumbher well indeed, so well that when the time came to squeeze Kumbher dry, there would be enough and more to compensate him for his pains. That native, Madhoji Sindhia, thought he had got the better of him. The fool! He did not know Senor Velasco Noronha!

To be continued



SMALLEST,
LARGEST,
TALLEST...

The galaxy, Milky Way, to which our solar system belongs, consists of hundreds of billions of stars. It is disc-like in shape and about 100,000 light years across, about 100,000 light years thick at the centre. What is a light year? It is the distance light travels in one year at a speed of 299,792 kms per second; it works out to 9.46 million million kms. Does it stagger your imagination?

The nearest star outside the solar system is **Proxima Centauri**.

But forget making a friendly visit to it. It is over 40 trillion kms away! A space traveller would have to spend a whole lifetime to reach it, even travelling as fast as light.

There are more than **200 billion billion stars** some of which have a diameter that is 1000 times larger than the Sun's.

Sometimes a large star runs out of gas to burn and explodes, becoming billions of times brighter than the Sun for a while. This is called a **Supernova**. The

explosion throws huge quantities of dust and gas into space which may be many times more than the mass of the Sun. Astronomers observe about 20 Supernovae in a typical year. But in our own galaxy, the Milky Way, only seven Supernovae have been observed in the last 2000 years.

The **smallest stars** are the **neutron stars** or **Pulsars**, that are almost entirely made of atomic particles called neutrons. These are thrown into space after a Supernova

explodes. They have a diameter of just 10-20 kms.

A Supernova explosion may also leave behind an invisible object called a **Black Hole**. It has such intense gravitational pull that even light cannot escape its force.

We all know that the Sun is the largest star in the solar system. Here are some more Sun facts for your file:

- *Its mass is **740 times** as great as that of **all the planets combined**.

- *More than three-fourths of the Sun's mass is made up of **hydrogen**.

- *Its diameter is about 1,392,000 kms, which is 109 times that of the Earth.

- *Light from the Sun takes about 8 minutes and 20 seconds to reach the Earth.

- *Its surface temperature is only about 5500°C. You'd agree that is pretty cool if you knew that the temperature at its core is some 15,000,000°C!

- *The Sun has been around for 4,600,000,000 years and is still glowing hot.

- *No more fears about the crude oil reserves being exhausted or there being inadequate supply

of electricity. The Earth can have unlimited supply of energy if we were to switch over to Solar Energy. It is estimated that the Sun will continue to be a source of energy for another **5 billion years**.

- *The Sun moves at a speed of 19 kms per second through the Milky Way. The spinning motion of the Milky Way gives the Sun and the other stars near it a speed of 250 kms per second. Yet it takes **250 million years** for the Sun to complete one trip round the centre of the galaxy.

- *The gravity of the Sun is greater than any other planet. A person weighing 45 kgs on the Earth would weigh 1270 kgs on the Sun.

- Ever wondered what the shooting star or falling star is? It is just a **meteor**. Many of you would have made a wish on one too at some time or the other. Meteors result when a **meteoroid**, which is a chunk of metallic or stony matter, enters the earth's atmosphere. According to scientists, every day about **200 million meteors** are visible in the atmosphere. As it does, it grows hot and glows. Most of the

meteoroids burn up before entering the Earth's atmosphere. So what happens to the meteoroids as they burn up and reach the Earth? Well, they add to the Earth's weight—by as much as **900 metric tons** everyday. Heavy stuff that!

The **largest meteorite** ever found on Earth is in **Hoba West in Namibia**. It weighs **60 metric tons**.

The largest **meteorite crater** in the world is the 640 kms wide depression on the **eastern shore of Hudson Bay in Canada**.

Space Odyssey

Where does atmosphere end and space begin? It is usually said to begin about **160 kms** above the Earth, where the air is so thin that a satellite may continue circling the Earth. But even there, there is some air which can slow a satellite. Solar storms in the upper atmosphere can also cause a satellite to fall. This is what had happened to the Skylab in 1979.

The **first artificial satellite, Sputnik I**, was launched by the erstwhile U.S.S.R. in 1957. It virtually marked the

beginning of the space age.

The **first animal** to go into space was the dog **Laika**, sent aboard the Sputnik II in 1957.

Yuri A. Gagarin of the erstwhile U.S.S.R. was the **first man to orbit the Earth** on April 12, 1961.

The U.S.S.R. also has the distinction of sending the **first woman cosmonaut** into space. **Valentina Tereshkova** was in orbit for over 70 hours in June 1963.

The **first manned flight to the moon** was in 1969, when the Apollo 11 was launched by the U.S. **Neil A.**

Armstrong was the first man to land on the moon on July 20, 1969.

Columbia was the **first space shuttle**, launched by the U.S., in 1981. A space shuttle is a spacecraft that takes off like a rocket, but lands like an aeroplane. It is ready for another launch in four weeks.

The worst ever **space tragedy** took place when

the **Challenger** exploded seconds after take off, killing all the seven crew members on January 28, 1986.

The **first manned U.S. space station, Skylab I**, was launched in 1973. The first Soviet (then U.S.S.R.) space station, **Mir**, was placed in orbit in February 1986. In 1987 and 1988, cosmonauts **Musa Manarov** and **Vladimir Titov** spent a record 366 days aboard **Mir**.

*Compiled by
Thangamani*



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CROSSROADS 11

Eventfully Yours!

S.S.

Looking back at the people, places and happenings that have left their mark on us, *Eventfully Yours!* tests your familiarity with them. Have fun as you explore the past!

CLUES

Across

1 The Genoese whose landing in the West Indies marked the discovery of the New World. His ships on the journey were called 'Santa Maria', 'Nina' and 'Pinta' (11,8)

5 The Italian who invented the battery in 1800 (5)

6 The U.S. President who abolished the practice of slavery (7)

7 The first man to take a 'ride' in space (4,7)

9 The person after whom America is named. This explorer, in spite of not being the first one to land in America, was the first to acknowledge it as a new country and first to claim to have landed on the mainland (7,8)

11 Painter and sculptor par excellence, honoured as 'Man of the Renaissance' and creator of the famous

Mona Lisa (8,2,5)

12 The first person to take a photograph with a camera in 1822 (6,6)

15 The greatest explorer of Central Africa—a doctor and a missionary (5,11)

16 The father of printing (9)

17 The German whose accidental discovery of x-rays proved to be a major stride in the fields of health and medicine (7,8)

18 A 17th century medical practitioner whose theory on circulation of blood was revolutionary (7,6)

Down

1 The person whose theory about evolution dramatically changed popular thought (7,6)

2 The place the Japanese bombed in a sneak attack on December 7, 1941 (5,7)

3 The man who invented the telephone (4)

4 The Indian surgeon recognised as the father of plastic surgery (7)

8 At the bottom of the earth! The first to reach the South Pole, this fearless Norwegian flew over the North Pole too and was the first to make the famous North-West Passage via the north of Canada, around Alaska and the Bering Strait (5,8)

10 The scientist whose theories about the laws of gravity and motion explained many phenomena in nature (5,6)

12 The physician who first developed vaccination (6)

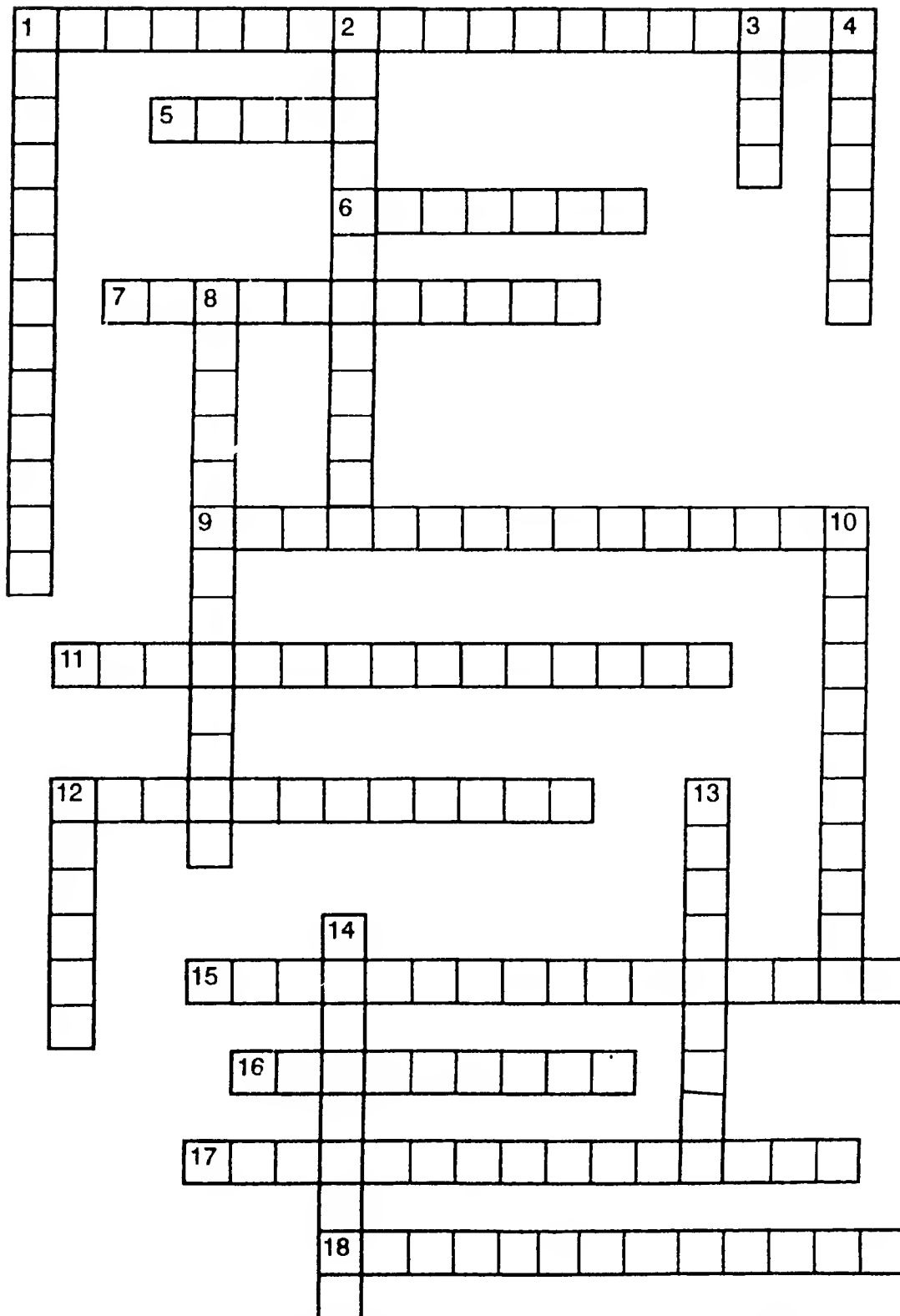
13 The inventor of the steam engine (5,4)

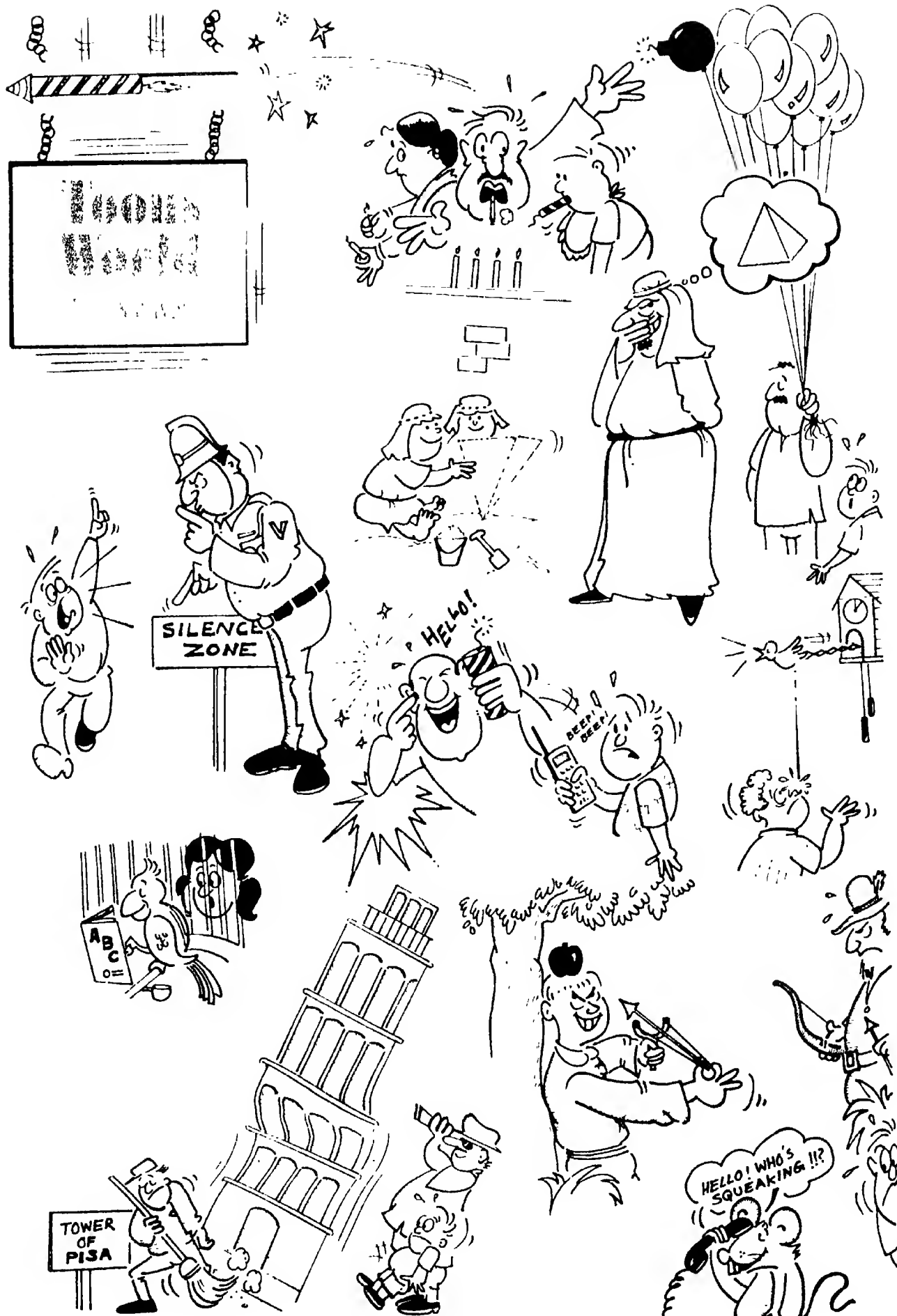
14 The place where Orville and Wilbur Wright made their first successful ascent and descent in their flying machine (5,4)

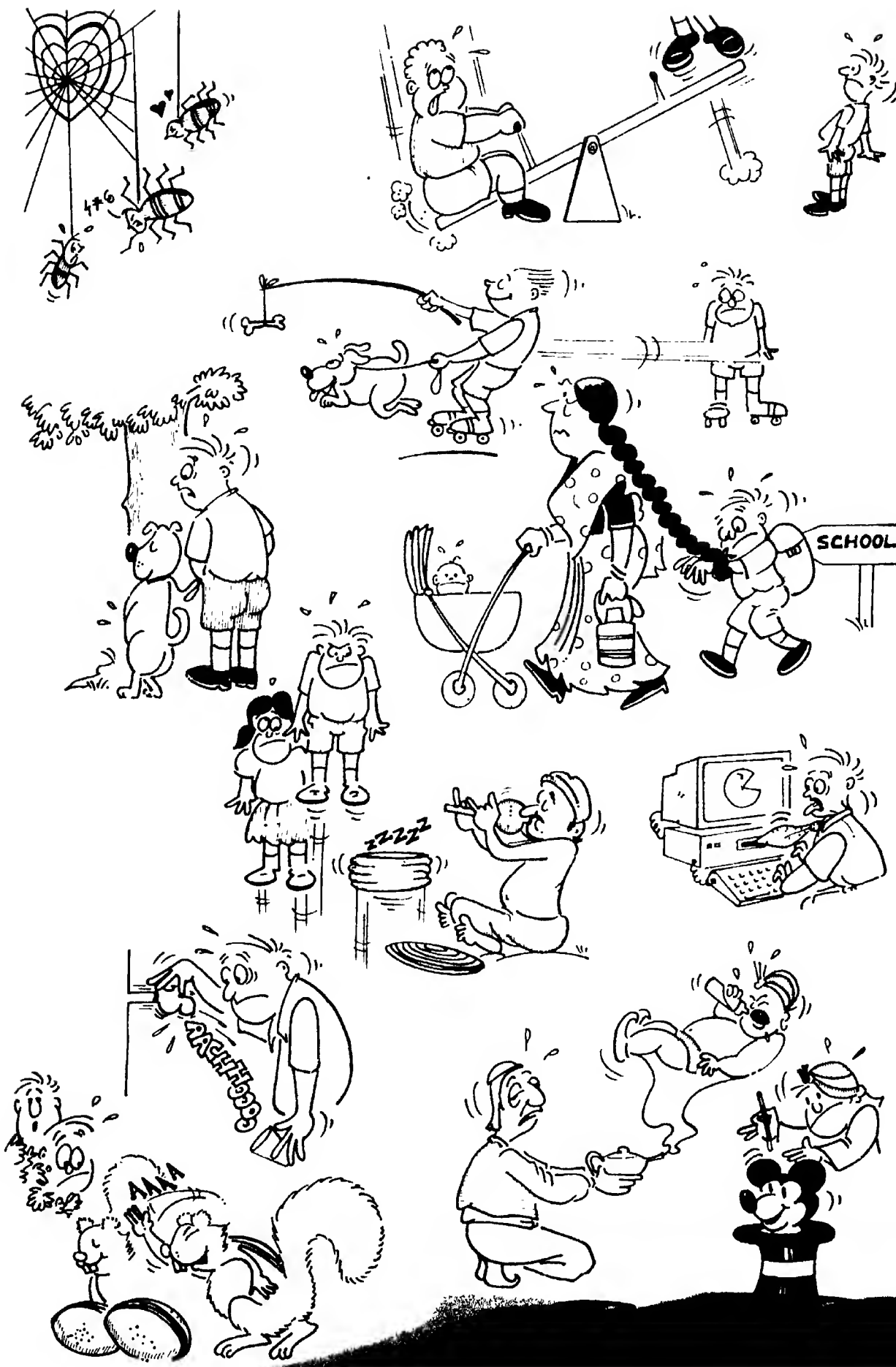
Hurry up and send in your replies by November 25, 1996. The first all-correct entry will receive a one-year gift subscription to *Children's World*. Answers and results in January 1997. Congratulations, Renu Menon, Mumbai! Winner of Crossroads 9 (September issue).

CROSSROADS 11

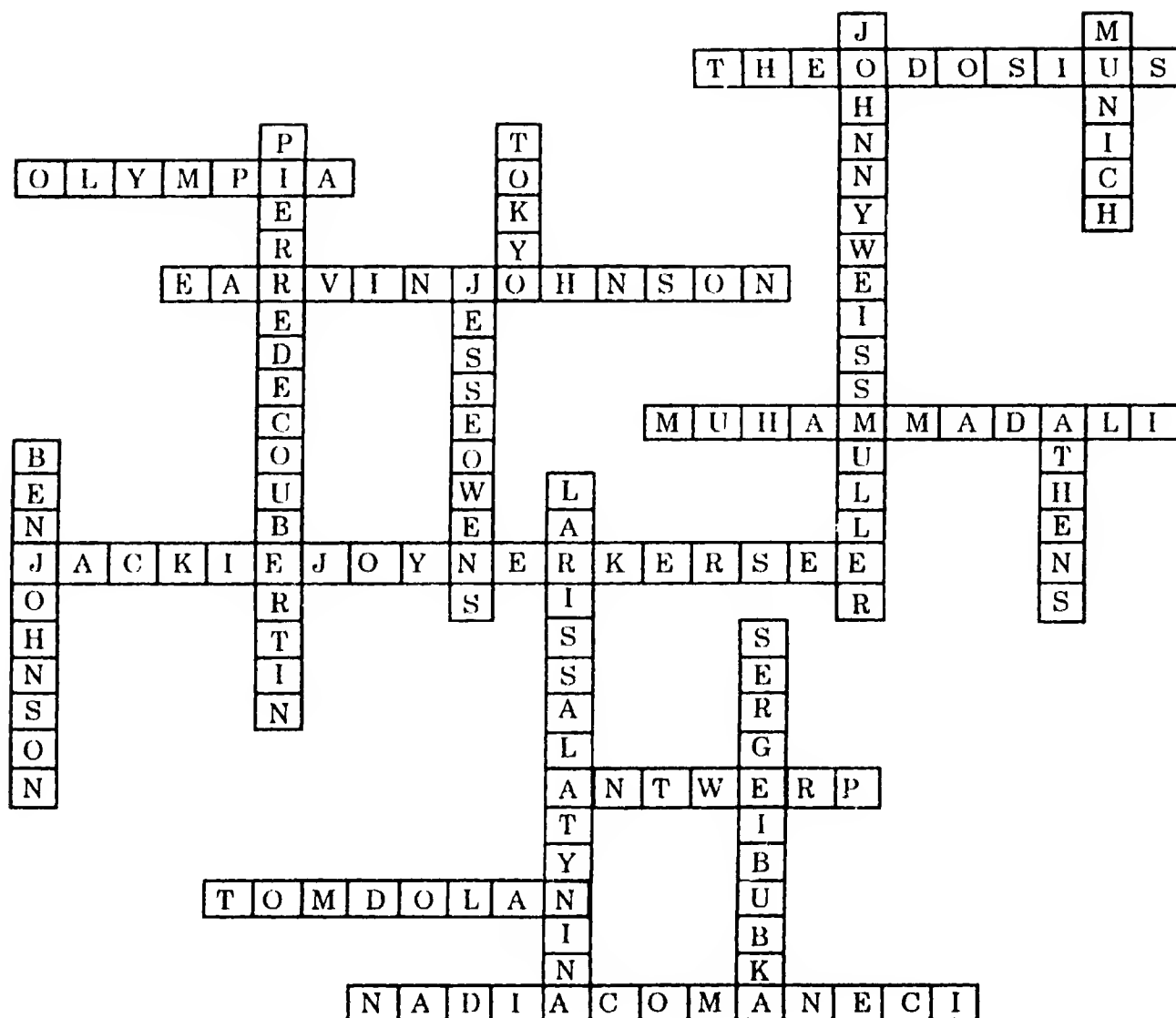
Eventfully Yours!







...with ...





Text: Dipavali Debroy

Illustrations: Beejee

THIS YEAR Diwali is on November 10. But what is Diwali, Dipavali or Dipanvita?

It is the occasion when Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, Beauty and Prosperity, is worshipped on the *amavasya* or moonless night of the month of Kartika in the Indian calendar.

But this is not quite the complete answer. Diwali is not an isolated occasion of festivity. It is actually the high point of a series of festivals which begins a whole month before what we call Diwali, with the *Navaratra* celebrations.

Navaratra, the ten-night festival ending with Dussehra, marks the end of monsoon and reminds us about Rama's

worshipping of the Goddess Durga.

Five days after Dussehra, when the moon is full, comes the *Kaumudi Mahotsava* or *Kojagari Purnima*. On this night, Goddess Lakshmi tours the world. People dress up in bright, new clothes, drink coconut milk, and stay up the night playing dice in the belief that this will please Lakshmi.

Five days later, that is, ten days after Dussehra, is *Karwa Chauth*, a thanksgiving on the part of married women.

Diwali preparations start soon after.

Cleaning and white-washing of houses begins. People start buying new clothes, gifts, sweets and

fireworks. In earlier times, the gifts used to be clothes, sweetmeats and dry fruits. Sweets and even some of the fireworks used to be home-made. This tradition is now on the wane.

Diwali arrives exactly 20 days after Dussehra, on an *amavasya* or moonless night. Goddess Lakshmi goes again on a tour of the world and has to be welcomed in by any householder who wants her favour. This is Lakshmi's second trip of the world. The first one had been pretty recent, on *Kojagari purnima* night, a fortnight earlier.

With lights and flowers, trinkets, perfume, vermillion and

sweetmeats, Lakshmi must be welcomed again.

Traditionally, even before one worships Lakshmi on the moonless night of Diwali, one must bid farewell to a goddess named Alakshmi. She is Lakshmi's elder sister, but as unlike Lakshmi as possible. While Lakshmi is lovely and likes things to be bright and shining all around, Alakshmi is ugly and fond of darkness and filth. The two sisters thus cannot stay under the same roof for even a minute. Lakshmi does not set foot in a house where Alakshmi lurks. So, strictly according to tradition, there must be *Alakshmi-vidaya* before *Lakshmi-puja* at Diwali.

On the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Kartika, people celebrate *Dhan Trayodasi* or *Dhanteras*. In addition to cleaning up their houses and even white-washing them, many households make it a point to buy some metal utensil that day. This is in honour of Kubera, the treasurer of the gods. It is supposed to save the family from untimely deaths. On the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of Kartika, people celebrate *Chhoti Diwali*, originally *Naraka-*

chaturdashi after the demon Naraka, who had terrorised the world. When Krishna killed him, people were so relieved that they lit up their houses with lamps.

Like Dussehra, Diwali has links with the *Ramayana* as well. *Chhoti Diwali* is the day when Hanuman reached Ayodhya with the message that Rama was soon to return, and the citizens started getting the city ready to receive him.

On this day, early in the morning, the tradition is for men to take oil-bath and worship their departed ancestors.

Another custom on this day is to bow to a heap of cowdung or *Karishi*, which is not only a symbol of Naraka, but also a residence of Lakshmi (who for this reason is also called *Karishini*).

In modern times and urban areas, this is the day when relatives and neighbours visit one another to exchange gifts.

Some households start preparing for the next evening, decorating the area where Lakshmi and Ganesha will be seated, rolling wicks for the lamps, or hanging up festoons over the doorway.

People throng pavement shops selling clay images of Lakshmi and Ganesha, earthen lamps, fireworks and sweets, parched rice and candy.

The third day, that is, the fifteenth day of the dark fortnight is the Kartika *amavasya* or Dipavali. It is the day Rama reached Ayodhya to find the city lit up in his welcome. People who like to follow traditions begin Diwali by taking an early morning oil-bath and paying their respects to their forefathers and gods. There is no fasting on Diwali day; instead people eat, drink and make merry. As evening falls, everyone dresses up in new, glittery clothes and ornaments.

Not too many, but some people still observe the ritual of driving Alakshmi out before Lakshmi can be worshipped. Now is the time for that. The figure of a woman is shaped out of a lump of cowdung and placed at the doorway or the main gate on the outer side. With the left hand, the lady of the household sprinkles it with flowers and water. The hymn she chants is to the following effect:

"O Goddess Alakshmi!
You are ugly, with uneven teeth, dressed in clothes

of black, and armed with a broomstick. I worship you. Favour me, and take your leave!"

Once Alakshmi has been thrown out with such impeccable manners, the householders feel free to welcome Lakshmi in.

The exact hour for Lakshmi puja has to be determined with the help of the *panjika* or the Indian calendar. The members of the household gather together, with relatives, friends and

neighbours joining in.

An earthen or silver icon of Lakshmi is placed on a low stool or platform, with that of Ganesha on her left. Some families use small earthen huts instead of platforms. Flowers, rice, parched rice, water, lamps, incense, sweets, and several other items are arranged on big platters. The whole process of worshipping Lakshmi is in several stages. It is preceded by the worship

of Ganesha, Varuna, Navagraha, and Shodashamatrika. It is followed by that of Mahakali, Mahasaraswati, Kubera, and the Dipa or the lamp.

The prayers to Lakshmi run basically as follows:

"O Goddess Lakshmi! You are beautiful, with eyes like the lotus, holding a lotus and sitting on a lotus. I worship you. Favour me. Never leave my household."



Towards the very end, lamps are moved about in a rhythmic pattern so as to ward off evil, and everyone chants a song to Lakshmi.

At the end of this, the sweets which had been offered to Lakshmi are distributed among the gathering. Lamps which had been lit during the *puja* are now sent out to various portions of the house, the doorway, the roof-top, the courtyard, the garbage-dump and so on.

This is followed by a chanting of Vedic hymns sung to Lakshmi (*Shri-sukta* and *Lakshmi-sukta*).

It must be remembered here that there is a lot of regional variation in Diwali celebrations.

More or less with the *arati*, younger members of the household spill out into courtyards, balconies and roof-tops and start on a display of fireworks. All the houses are bedecked with earthenware lamps, candles or even electric bulbs. The air resounds with bangs. It is believed throughout the length and breadth of India that only those who light up their houses this night will win Lakshmi's favour. It is also believed that the

sound of crackers scares Alakshmi away.

The day after Diwali, that is, the first day of the bright fortnight is called *Bali-pratipada* after the demon-king Bali, who had once taken control of the three worlds and cast the gods and goddesses—including Lakshmi—into prison.

Bali, represented in five colours, is offered rice, curry, meat and wine alongwith flowers and incense.

Govardhan puja takes place on the same day. This is a commemoration of Krishna's raising of the Govardhan hill to shelter cowherds from showers. It includes the festival of *Annakuta* or *Ankut* that is observed on the same day. *Annakuta* literally means a mountain of rice. As a festival, it means offering all sorts of food to Krishna and then distributing it among devotees.

But increasingly in urban households, this day is coming to mean just a massive clearing-up session after the previous night's festivity. Torn wrappers and stubs of fireworks, wax drippings from candles, make the world look rather pathetic.

The next day, that is, the second day of the bright fortnight is *Kartika-sukladvitiya*, *Yama-dvitiya* or *Bhāratrī dvitiya*. Or simply, *Bhai-duj*.

This festivity is in honour of Yama, the god of Death. Yama is said to have a sister called Yami or Yamuna. Because of this brother-sister association, the *Puranas* have recommended that on this day, sisters invite their brothers over and anoint their forehead with a prayer for their longevity.

Thus end the Diwali celebrations—often known as *tithi-panchaka* because they include: Dhanteras, Chhoti Diwali, Diwali, Bali-pratipada, Govardhan puja, Annakuta and Bhai-duj.

Diwali has a twofold significance. On a philosophical level, it is an invocation to the inner light that is there within all of us. When we light the lamps at Diwali, it is not the house or the shop or the factory that we are lighting up, but our own minds. Diwali dispels the gloom—not of a moonless night—but of a cheerless spirit.

This Diwali, let there be light within you.



21.10.96

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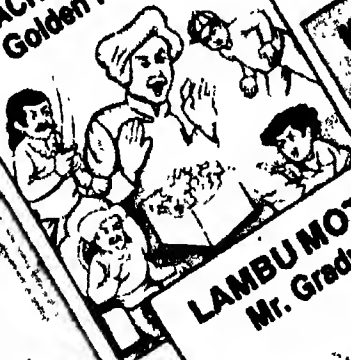


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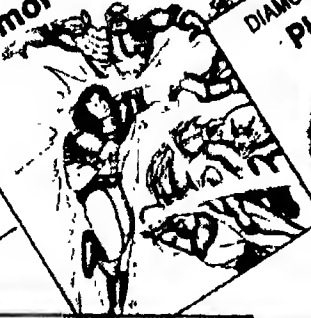
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CHILDREN'S WORLD

DECEMBER
Vol X)
No. 1

THE CHRISTMAS FEELING... IN INDIA

A Christmas feature that captures the spirit of
this festival in India

TM and DD

A LETTER TO YOU

The irresistible Perky or is it Raghu? Up to their
tricks again!

SPOTLIGHT ON U.S. PRESIDENTS

USA elects a new President. What are the top
men of the most powerful country like?

Pratibha Nath

LIVING ON ICE: THE POLAR BEAR

This huge hulk of fur adapts totally to its
background

Preeti Ramesh, CEE-NFS

WHAT A PEST!

Smallest, largest, tallest in the world of flies,
mosquitoes and such like pests

Thangamani

YOUNG REBEL

Story

"When they admit it, it is half the battle won"

Vernon Thomas

TOONS WORLD

Cartoons

Ajit Narayan

A TREASURE BEYOND COMPARE

Story

Mama Day is not as dreadful as she is made out to
be. She is in fact a treasure beyond compare

Cheryl Rao

OLIVER, THE SURVIVOR...

Reader's Choice

'I'll never touch *Oliver Twist* again' she declared—only to reread the book several times thereafter

Dipavali Debroy

MEMORABLY YOURS!

Crossroads—12
SS

RASIKBHAI'S TOMORROW

Comics

Tomorrow never comes. In Kilwada that creates some problems

Shalan Savur/Beejee

TIME TO STOP

Toyland

Having traipsed to Toyland throughout the year, it is time to stop reading about toys and start playing

O.P. Bhagat

THE TREASURE OF KUMBHER

Serial Story

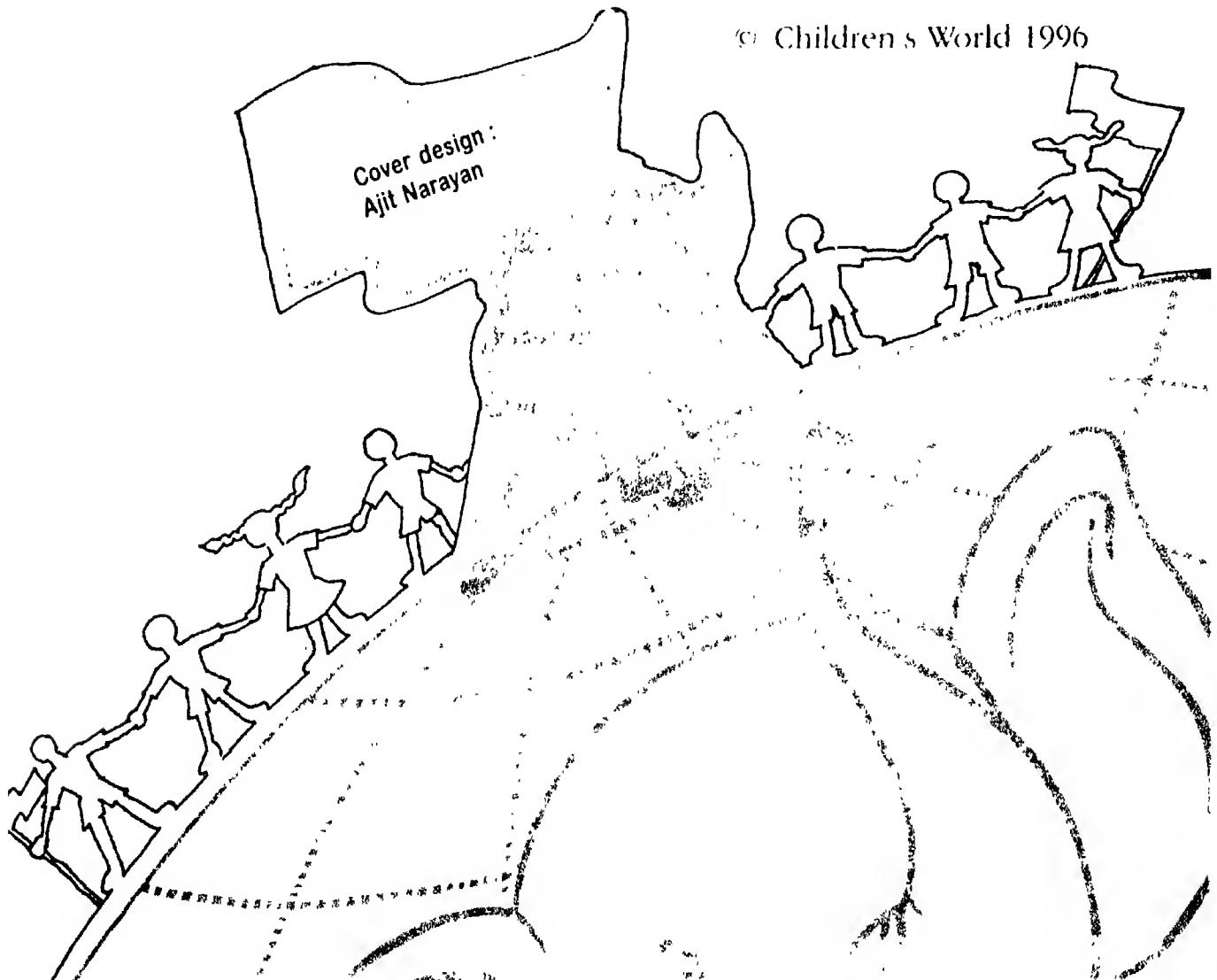
Krishna Narayan

PEN-FRIENDS



Children's World Wishes its readers a Merry Christmas

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Dear Editor..

Before I write about myself I want to tell you how your magazine has affected, guided and nurtured my hopes, even when their flame burnt very low.

It started with something as normal as admiration for some (most) of the stories and articles in such a superbly edited magazine. It turned into something very personal when an article I sent ('Complexities of a teeming land'), neither hoping for publication nor even approval, won second place in the Your Pages feature three years ago.

I could not believe that such faith was placed (or misplaced as I considered it) in me! When I did not do as well as I expected to in my Class XII exams, the only thing that kept me going was the fact that two of my poems were published earlier in the year in a separate publication ('Memories' and 'Tomorrow'). Later, with

confidence anew I answered my State entrance exams and, believe it or not, I secured a merit seat for the BDS course (Dentistry) in my home town itself.

I have just completed my first year. The results arrived last week. Here is the most recent link of our association—I stood first in the university! I was expecting to get a first class but I got a distinction! This was possible even though I did not believe in myself, neither did many others (excluding my father and a few friends and teachers), because I kept rereading the letter you sent me, three years ago boosting my ego and making me feel capable of giving and receiving the best. I thank you for all this and more. So does our college (which has never got a rank in the university, since it started half a dozen years ago).

I've wanted to be a dentist ever since I can remember. I have not, and will not regret my choice.

When my article was published, I was pressurised into going in for a journalism course. Yet I know (as did most of my friends and family) that one article makes not a writer.

**Soumya Shetty,
Mangalore**

It was a pleasure to go through this magazine when I first came across it last month in my school library.

The positive feature about this magazine is that it teaches children the most important aspect of life—our moral values, which other magazines fail to communicate. *Children's World* brings out the best emotions within a child.

I would suggest that there must be a few stories or articles reflecting the discriminations faced by a child in today's world. And there should be at least one page listing current affairs in an entertaining way, i.e. accompanied by cartoons.

**Ritu Thakur,
New Delhi**

...Dear Readers

Soumya Shetty's letter and the advance copy of this year's November Your Pages special issue came to the desk simultaneously...

Naturally, all the misgivings, all the doubts one had had while weighing the pros and cons of the prize-winning articles, the highly commended, the to-be-published ones... melted away in seconds, with Soumya's three-years-later-reactions. And as we take our last issue of 1996 to the

Press, it reaffirms our faith. *Children's World* is that treasure beyond compare whose immense value you continue to realise years and years later. It is a lovely feeling for us to close the year on. It will make sharing the Christmas season's spirit that much more genuine.

Ajit Narayan however, has gone to town only to discover the mischief in the air when Santa Clauses abound. Not so TM and DD, they discover the origins of how Christmas came to be

celebrated on December 25 and, more specifically, how in India we add our own unique charm to this festival. *Rasikbhai* sounds a warning note about 'tomorrows' that never come, which we may do well to heed this year end. In the meantime keep up your spirits, keep up the cheer, enjoy the winter season that is here.

And we will see you...

In the New Year..

**Season's readings
and Merry Christmas**

Editor

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VANDANA 24/83 CKB

Text: TM and DD

That Christmas feeling's in the air
It's here—it's there—it's everywhere.
In the home, the shops, the street,
Shines on the faces of people we meet.
Rushing here, and dashing there,
Collecting all their Christmas fare.
Everything for the children's tree,
Gifts for all the family.
Cards to greet our friends away,
Wishing them all, a happy day.

(Russ Tyson's Australian Christmas Book)

Such 'Christmas feelings' are shared by most of us, the world over. They have deep roots in history and psychology.

The very word comes from the Old English phrase *Cristes Maesse* or Christ's Mass. Christ literally means 'the one anointed with substances rubbed into a paste'. So Jesus Christ means Jesus who was so anointed. Mass refers to thanksgiving offered

collectively, as in the church. Christmas thus means collective celebrations for Christ. In the word itself, there is no reference to the birthday of Christ.

But down the ages, the word Christmas has certainly become associated with the birth of Christ. It is universally regarded as a birthday or natal day and is also known as the Nativity and the Noel (Nowel), both of which

mean 'relating to birth'

Christmas is also written as Xmas. For, in Greek, X is the first letter of Christ's name and a holy symbol.

When is it Christmas?

December 25 is, of course, Christmas Day. But the exact date of Jesus's birth is not known. In fact, there is very little information about Him, and available records of His life make it difficult to pinpoint

any particular date as His birthday. For three centuries, Jesus' birth was celebrated by the church on different dates. It is in 336 A.D. that Christmas was first mentioned in the Roman calendar, and in 354 A.D., Bishop Liberius of Rome fixed December 25 as Christmas.

If no one was sure about the exact date of Christ's birth, why was that date chosen? This could be because it coincided with the many pagan festivals that were celebrated in the pre-Christian era. North Europeans marked the end of the harvest season with festivals in mid-December. The ancient Romans propitiated their harvest-god Saturn and the sun-god Mithras (of Persian origin) about that time too.

Later, in traditional Christianity, the Christian Year came to be evolved. This was a ritual reliving of the life of Jesus, a cycle of events corresponding also to the sun in its annual course. Jesus is regarded as the Sun of Justice and, according to ancient calculations, the Birth of the Sun took place in the midnight of the Winter

solstice. So Jesus is regarded as one born in the midnight of the Winter solstice. The Christian Year begins about four weeks before Christmas, roughly with the Winter solstice when, in the Northern Hemisphere, the sun is at its lowest meridian and is just about to begin once more its upward journey towards mid-heaven. This period or season before Christmas is known as the Advent.

On the twelfth night after his birth, January 6, baby Jesus was visited by the *Magi* or Wise Men from the East bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This visit is commemorated as the feast of the Epiphany (which, in Greek, means 'showing oneself'). It was not until the 4th century that the festival of Christmas was separated clearly from that of the Epiphany. In popular imagination, the *Magi* are associated with December 25, whereas they did not arrive until January 6. In East Europe, members of the Eastern Orthodox Church actually celebrate their Christmas on January 6. In Ethiopia, members of

the Coptic Orthodox Church celebrate it on January 7.

But though we date our calendars from the year of Jesus' birth, no one knows for sure what year—not to speak of the day—he was born. More likely, it was 6 B.C.

Christmas in India

Christian influence came to the subcontinent with the Portuguese and the Dutch, the French and the English. By now, Christmas has become an important festival of India, although Boxing Day is hardly observed anywhere. December 25 is a public holiday, celebrated throughout India, but with regional variations. The celebrations in Goa, which had been under Portuguese rule, differ in detail from those in Bengal, which had been under the British. Madurai, Ranchi, Shimla, Shillong—each has its own Christmas, with the Christmas spirit unifying them all.

In New Delhi, many churches observe the Advent Season (from December 1 this year) to help people prepare themselves for Christmas. To attend

[illegible]

8

In Calcutta, the city built by the British, till the other day, the New Market or Hogg Market used to wear a festive look with the approach of Christmas or *Borho din* (the Great Day), as it used to be called. People used to go to Park Street and New Market simply to see the Christmas decorations—spangled cotton-wool draped in

At Bandel and Serampore, early strongholds of the Church, the town has a brighter face during Christmas. Even in

towns like Burdwan, where Christian influence was much less, apart from Church service and celebrations in Christian homes, shop-windows display the Nativity scene, and pavement-stalls sell Christmas cards. During the British period, the practice of sending cards with the message *Merry Christmas and Happy New Year* spread all over India. This today, is an encouragement to the small-scale industry for manufacturing cards. What is more, we now send cards to one another at Dussehra and Diwali.

Christmas in India is not restricted to Christians. It is not just a public holiday for non-Christians. There exist several non-Christian families who send Christmas cards, attend Midnight Mass, put up a small Christmas tree, light it up, and, of course, enjoy Christmas parties.

But the most unique way in which Christmas has been absorbed in India is at Santiniketan, West Bengal, where Rabindranath Tagore established his *ashrama*, now the Visva Bharati University. Tagore had a Brahmo Samaj

background, and members of this community, like Keshab Chandra Sen, had great respect for Christianity. Jesus Christ had inspired Tagore to great poetry. In fact, the only poem Tagore is said to have written directly in English was on the birth of Jesus. It was only later that he translated it into Bengali as the famous *Shishu-tirtha* which means 'Pilgrimage to the Child'.

The annual celebrations at Santiniketan are held on December 23-25 and are known as *Poush-utsava*. For decades now, the third day (December 25) is celebrated as *Christ-utsava* (pronounced *Khrishtotsava* in Bengali). Students at Santiniketan, while they do not have any particular doctrine thrust upon them, grow up celebrating Christmas, the *Khrishtotsava*. In Tagore's times, on December 25, a sermon used to be given by Tagore himself in the stained-glass *mandir* at Santiniketan. The sermons and other pieces by Tagore on Christ have been brought together in the book

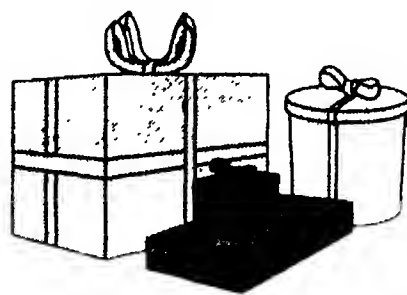
Khrishta (Christ).

Let us take a look at what Tagore had said on December 25, 1932:

"It is easy to pay one's respects to the great by ceremonially worshipping them on special days. But it is false comfort to deny them for 364 days and sing hymns to them on the 365th... That today is Christ's birthday, shall we say it by the calendar? The day which does not reflect itself within us, is it to be experienced in a mere count of time? The day we sacrifice in the name of Truth, the day we can—in genuine love—call all men brothers, that is the day when God The Son is born unto us, that is Christmas Day."
(*Khrishta*, p. 48-49)

So Christmas Day won't be Christmas without 'Christmas feeling'. Bring this feeling to yourself, your family, friends and neighbours.

Merry Christmas!



A letter to you



Dear past imperfects and present disastrouses,

I really don't think these chaps who write grammar books are all that clever. I mean, they do sound clever, with all those words like gerunds and clauses and auxiliaries that they keep using but actually they are not. How, for instance, can they even think of something like present perfect or past perfect?

How can they think that anything in the past, present or future can be perfect?

Perfect with Raghu around?

Take that day months

ago. Now in the past but then in the present. A summer day. A day, which, in my ignorance, my innocence, I thought was a perfect day. A cool day, with dark clouds, the first drops of rain, a welcoming, happy kind of day. I was sitting at the window, waiting for that terrifically sweet smell of rain on dry mud, when I saw something mysterious happening. My brother—my only brother, sole heir to my fortunes and Raghu's partner in crime, was going out of the front gate with a large suitcase! A very large suitcase!

"Hey," I called out.

"Hey!" But either he didn't hear me or he pretended not to, because he walked on. I was just about to rush out after him, when I saw the corner edge of another large suitcase emerging from the side of the house and behind it, or rather, all over it, was a red-faced Raghu. Yes, Raghu!

"Hey, Raghu!" I shouted.

At the same moment, he saw me and shouted too, much more rudely, I can tell you.

"Hey!" he said. "Come and help me!"

"With what?" I asked, though I knew.

"With this suitcase,

idiot!" he shouted back. "Can't you see I am carrying a dashed heavy suitcase? Come and help!"

"Why?" I asked.

"Because I want you to," he roared back. "Just come here and stop asking stupid questions."

But I wasn't going to be bullied. Certainly not. I wouldn't do just anything people asked me to. I had to know why first.

"Why are you carrying the suitcase?" I bawled. "Where are you taking it?"

Raghu looked at me with one of his exasperated looks. He's very good at these

exasperated looks. He looks straight at you in a totally unsmiling way and his ears drop as if to say, "Have you ever seen a bigger fool than this one?"

Anyway, so Raghu gave me one of his exasperated looks and then in a slow, painfully slow way, as if he was explaining the two times table to a tortoise that didn't understand the language, he said, "Because-it-is-going-to-rain. It-is-going-to-rain-very-very-hard."

I must have looked puzzled because he then went on. "There-is-going-to-be-a-flood. So it is better to take

allyourthings upstairs to the roof asquicklyas possible, so stop standing there and helpme with suitcase."

Put like that, there was nothing else I could do. Within a minute, I was out there, trying to lift the suitcase. Ouch! It was like lifting a baby elephant who was terribly overweight.

"What is in here?" I asked as Raghu made his way to the gate with a small loaf of bread in his right hand.

"Oh, that!" he said. "Some kitchen things!"

"Kitchen things?" I asked aghast. "But...but my mother's not at home. Does she know?"

"We are sparing her all the trouble," he said, as he opened the gate and left it open, graciously, for me. "By the time the floods come, her entire kitchen will be on the roof... Oh, hurry up," he added, "the drops are coming down. Hurry." Did I say the past can never be perfect? Nor the present? Nor the future?

I was lifting the suitcase again, the drops of rain were coming on faster, Raghu had gone on with his loaf of bread and suddenly there was my mother, at the





kitchen window, with a horrified expression on her face

"My kettle! Where's my kettle?" she wailed "And the cooker? The frying pan? Where are all the cups and glasses? Perky! Perky! What are you doing there with a suitcase? Don't tell me...Perky! Come here immediately."

*

Did I say the past is horribly imperfect? That day, so was the future, for a long, long time. Horribly imperfect. Even when my brother came with the rest of the kitchen stuff, all my mother would say was, "But you are older than

him. You should have taken care of my things. My precious kitchen things "

Raghu was nowhere to be seen. Apparently, he had gone off to buy a raincoat with his mother, and a satchel—a waterproof satchel for school!

*Your imperfect as
always,
Perky*

PS My mother hadn't even gone out because she thought it would rain. She was asleep.

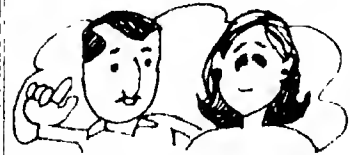
PPS It didn't even rain properly. After those first few drops, it stopped

PPSS Perfect present? Pooh! Double Pooh!

JOKES

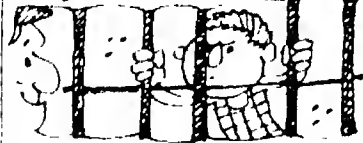
"I have my father's ears and my mother's nose."

"They must look funny without them."



"I am going to the zoo "

"Do they have room for you there?"



"Why did the Indians do such a short rain dance?"

"They only wanted it to drizzle "



"Do you believe in meditation?"

"Yes, my doctor always gives me some when I am coughing."



What did one can on the shelf say to the other can?

"You are my next of tin."



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SPOTLIGHT ON U.S. PRESIDENTS

Text : Pratibha Nath

Illustrations : Subir Roy

We all know the United States of America to be a super power and U.S. Presidents to be the most powerful of men. But it's fun to hear little personal details about these public figures, something that's more than plain and simple news, and shows them up to be human, like any one of us.

At a public meeting a few years back, President George Bush openly confessed that he disliked broccoli. "My mother always made me eat broccoli when I was a kid," he said, distaste writ large on his face. "But I say to myself, 'Now that I'm the President of America, nobody's going to force me to eat broccoli any more!'" You bet this confession was greeted by guffaws all over the world.

Abraham Lincoln cared a fig for his personal appearance. At 6 feet 4 inches, upping Bill Clinton by a whisker, he was the tallest American president. And William Howard Taft, at well over 300 pounds, was the fattest. He once reportedly got stuck in the door of his official limousine. James Madison was the smallest president by far.



At just 5 feet in height, he weighed barely 100 pounds after a solid dinner. John Quincy Adams was the only bald headed man ever elected president of the U.S. Ulysses Grant sometimes appeared without a beard. Once after he had argued a point with his wife and got the worst of the argument, he shaved off his moustache to show his resentment.

Zachary Taylor was the only U.S. president who never cast a vote because he died soon after his election. Andrew Jackson was the first president to travel by train, Teddy (Theodore) Roosevelt, the first to fly in an aeroplane and Ike (Dwight) Eisenhower the only one to hold a pilot's licence. Warren Harding was the first to speak over the radio while Eisenhower was the first to appear on TV. Bill Clinton is the first president to be born after World War II. He has two favourites—daughter Chelsea and the White House cat, Socks. Socks is a very private cat (!) and lensmen are forbidden to photograph her. Bill Clinton loves an early morning jog through the White House

grounds, perhaps to work off the rich food which he loves to eat.

Incidentally, the first name of Ulysses Grant was not Ulysses but Hiram. Woodrow Wilson's first name was actually Thomas. Taft was the first golfer at White House. Jimmy Carter was a successful peanut farmer in the state of Georgia and, for a while his mother, Lillian Carter served as a nurse in a Bombay hospital. Ronald Reagan used to act in cowboy movies. He had the looks but never quite made it to the big league on the silver screen. Harry Truman ushered in the nuclear era by decreeing that atom bombs be used against Japan during World War II. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the longest serving president—twelve years, one month and eight days. Crippled by infantile paralysis, he was in a wheel chair through most of his political life.

The most scholarly of U.S. presidents was James Garfield. He could write simultaneously in Latin with one hand and in Greek with the other! Franklin Pierce was

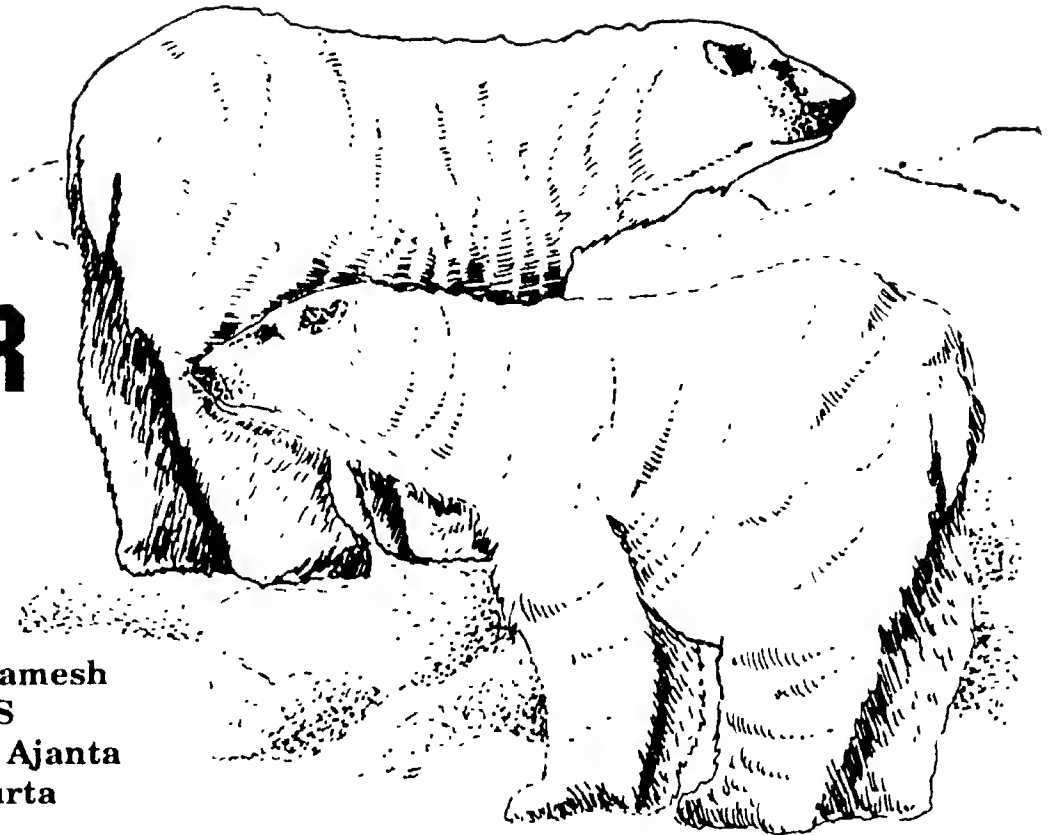
deeply interested in literature, counting among his friends men like Nathaniel Hawthorne and H.W. Longfellow. In sharp contrast, Andrew Jackson had never spent a day at school. It was his wife who taught him to read and write. James Tyler made up by having all of fourteen children. Ben Harrison and his wife were so terrified of the electric lights newly installed in 1891 that they let them burn all night rather than risk a shock by touching the switch!

Perhaps the most humane of U.S. presidents was Abraham Lincoln. Once he and a friend were driving through the countryside when they saw a pig whose neck had got stuck in a gate. Lincoln got off the carriage and released the pig. When his friend appreciated this act of kindness, Lincoln replied, "I did it for my own peace of mind. How could I rest, knowing that the pig was struggling to get free?"



LIVING
ON
ICE

THE POLAR BEAR



Text: Preeti Ramesh
CEE-NFS

Illustration: Ajanta
Guhathakurta

A HUGE hulk of fur, barely distinguishable from the monotonous white landscape of the Arctic, looms up behind an unsuspecting ringed seal and suddenly attacks, taking it completely by surprise. Its natural camouflage has worked in its favour once again and the Polar bear rambles off after yet another satisfying meal.

Known as the world's biggest carnivore, the Polar bear is quite a formidable animal. Standing up to a height of 10 feet, male Polar bears can weigh more

than 600 kg. With a yellowish-white luxuriant fur coat that it wears to face the harsh climate it inhabits, the Polar bear has adjusted to life on the ice quite well.

The Polar bear belongs to the order *Carnivora* and the family *Ursidae*. Its diet consists of seals, walruses, small whales, carrion and sometimes blueberries and crowberries that appear in the brief Arctic summer. Polar bears are good swimmers. Their slightly webbed feet aid the paddling action and they can swim for hours

at a stretch in the cold waters of the Arctic. Water is not absorbed by the fur and runs off. The short, curved claws on their feet help in gripping the ice as well as their prey. If chased, the bears are surprisingly agile and climb cliffs and rocks with great ease. The ears and tail are very small, which minimizes the loss of heat. Polar bears are very inquisitive by nature. There have been many incidents of Polar bears raiding the dwelling of Arctic explorers hoping to find food or perhaps out of

sheer curiosity about the unfamiliar.

Migration takes place in winter when the bears move to the southern edge of the floating ice fields in search of ice-free regions. Polar bears are solitary creatures and come together only during the mating period or when converging on a meal. The life expectancy of the bears is around 25 years and they reach the breeding age by five years. The mating period of these bears is from the month of April to June. Cubs are born in snow dens which are dug by the females before they

give birth. A litter may have three cubs on an average. The soft balls of fur are fed a diet of fat-rich milk by the mother which enables them to cope with the harsh winter of the world outside. The cubs are ready to face the world by the age of three months, weighing eight to twelve kilos. Polar bear cubs are quite attached to their mother and stay with her till they are 28 months old.

Despite the fact that the Polar bear is not threatened by wild predators, its population has dwindled to

alarmingly low levels. The reason is not too difficult to understand. It is man again. Hunting for fur and trophies has drastically reduced the Polar bear population in the Arctic. A recent survey has put the number of Polar bears at 20,000. The demand for fur and the springing up of cities on bear migration routes has meant the decline of this marvellous species. Though this currently endangered animal has managed to survive in the Arctic for so long, its camouflage has been no help against man.



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What A Pest!



INSECTS are considered pests and are feared, despised and killed on sight by humans. They spread diseases like malaria, cholera, typhoid, dysentery and the dreaded dengue, contaminate our food, destroy crops and generally make a nuisance of themselves. Not all of them are pests, though. Some like the honey bee, insects which eat up other insect pests and those that pollinate flowers are useful to us, not to forget that they provide food to fish and fowl. Let us then find out some fascinating facts about these six-legged creatures. Incidentally, spiders and other creepy-crawly like centipedes, mites and ticks do not fall into the category of insects.

* Of over 1 million species of insects described by scientists, almost a million are insects. Every year 7000 to 10,000 new kinds of insects are discovered by scientists. **Weevils and beetles** form the largest group of insects. One out of every three animal species known today belong to this group,

* One of the largest

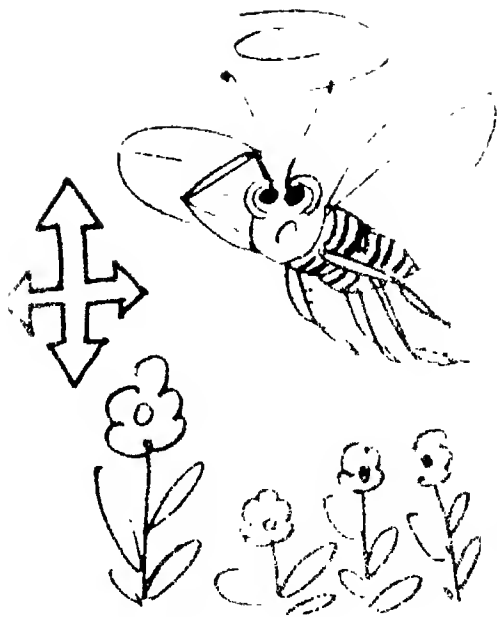
insects is the **Goliath beetle** which grows to about 13 cms in length and weighs 40 gms.

* **Queen Alexandra's birdwing** is the largest butterfly with a wingspan of 28 cms. One of the **smallest butterflies** is the **Western pygmy blue** of North America, with a wingspan of just about 1 cm.

* It is estimated that **50 per cent of crops** produced in Africa is destroyed by insects, the chief of which are the desert locusts, weevils and bugs. A swarm of desert locusts may consist of billions of them and cover over 500 square kms. When a swarm of them settle down at a place, they destroy every bit of vegetation.

* The **fastest flying insect** is the **dragonfly**. Scientists estimate that it can fly as fast as 95 kms per hour. But when it comes to endurance, butterflies and locusts take the honours—they can fly over 160 kms on the food energy stored in their bodies.

* **Bees** have the unusual ability to fly **forward, backward, sideways** and can hover



in one place in the air

* The smallest insects include hairy-winged **Dwarf Beetles**, which are about 0.25 mm long and can easily crawl through the eye of the smallest needles.

* Insects breed at an astonishing rate. Some female insects may lay upto a billion eggs in a lifetime. Among insects, termites are the champion egg layers. A **female termite** can produce at a rate of **10,000 to 30,000 eggs or more per day.**

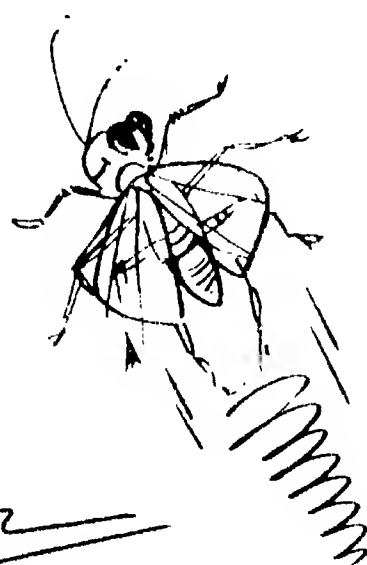
* Talking of phenomenal reproduction rates, consider this statistic, a pair of houseflies—in the space of **4 months**—could produce about

190,000,000,000,000,000,000 offspring, provided all of them live. Fortunately they all do not survive. Predators, parasites and food supply see to it that there is no population explosion among insects.

* Did you know that only a few kinds of insects have true hearing organs or 'ears'? And even these insects have them in every part of their bodies other than their heads! These 'ears' consist of short, flat membranes that vibrate when sound waves strike against them, just as our eardrums do. Most insects do not have even these 'ears'. They hear by means of delicate hairs on their antennae or elsewhere on their

bodies. Caterpillars hear with hairs scattered over their entire bodies. Know what they mean by being 'all ears'?

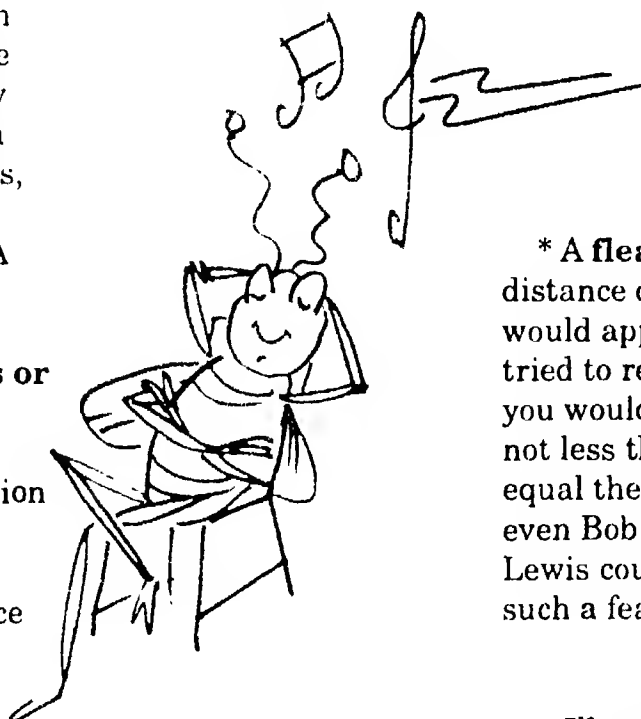
* Insects are capable of amazing feats. An ant can lift 50 times the weight of its body. If a man weighing 80 kgs were to do a similar thing, he would have to lift more than 3.5 metric tons, with his **teeth!**



* A **flea** can jump a distance of 35 cms. You would appreciate it if you tried to replicate it—for you would have to jump not less than 200 m to equal the record. Not even Bob Beamon or Carl Lewis could dream of such a feat.

*Compiled by
Thangamani*

Illustrations: Nilabho





Story: Vernon Thomas

Illustrations: Beejee

HE WAS fifteen, with a twisted sense of values. A young rebel, they called him—unapproachable, even by those who loved him.

"I did not do it," he flung defiantly at his Uncle.

The old gentleman raised sorrowful eyes to his face. "A likely story. Particularly, when this is the third occasion."

"I was innocent the last time," Ranjan Halдар flared. "Besides, he has no proof. It's only revenge that makes him act this way."

"It is your revenge

which makes you act the way you do," Nirmal Chakraborty spoke bitterly. "As a child, Anil Mitra was partial to you, though you returned ingratitude for kindness."

His head tilted sideways in mockery. "I have not been near the Mitras' house in months. How can I be held, therefore, for a theft of five hundred rupees?"

"Give a dog a bad name and hang him. Remember the first time you stole. Thirty rupees. You were only thirteen."

"I admit I stole that time to take Amit to the movies. I bet him I could

do so on his father's money. But I have not stolen now."

"I wish I could believe you," the old man sighed. "But there was that second time, as well. You stole to get even with Anil Mitra for stopping you from playing with Amit. Only, did you stop to think why he did so? He could not allow his son to play with someone who was such a bad influence on him."

"Bad influence!"

"Yes! The only words I can use on one who refuses to study, who spends his time at street corners with young

wastrels... You'll never change. Pray I had not made the mistake of adopting you."

"Then why did you?" Ranjan retorted and flung out of the room, almost colliding with his aunt who was about to enter.

Reba Chakraborty had been witness to the altercation from the adjoining room.

"It is you who are partly to blame, Nirmal," she told her husband quietly. "You have spoilt him. In the past he has got away with everything. Now, stealing for him is not a crime."

He covered his face with his hands, and his voice was muffled. "Was it a crime to love a child with so complete a heart?" he asked. "We had none of our own. I did what I felt was best for him. He should bless me for it. Instead, he seems to resent me."

"No use crying over spilt milk. It's too late to remedy matters."

"Yes, it is too late. The third time I may never even know if he is innocent. Why does he do it? If he needs money, he should ask me. Does he have to steal?"

"Maybe it's the rebellious spirit in him!



In any case, it makes him a hero in the eyes of his friends."

"A hero who is held for theft?"

"Yes! Heroism of the sort that causes young ruffians to thrill when they break windowpanes. Heroism that explains burnt trams and buses. You don't understand the boy, Nirmal! I have watched him grow from a spoilt brat into an inhuman monster. It's in him."

"He'll have to face it. They'll take him away. And when he comes back, he'll be a little more hardened, more of a devil. Is there no remedy? Can't we stop them from arresting him when they come this afternoon?"

She took his hand tenderly. "No remedy, my dear! We saved him from the lock-up on the last two occasions. Now the law must exercise itself. Innocent or not, he'll have to go."

The shed was a crude wooden structure, tin-roofed, and situated at the end of the courtyard. It had a single door and a barred window, and normally served as a storage godown. At times, it was used as a refuge, when the inmates

of the house required solitude. For which purpose a table and a chair had been provided.

When Ranjan locked himself into the place, his mind was made up. He was prepared for a siege. Some biscuits, a loaf of bread, and a flask of water lay on the table, alongside the gun—his Uncle's high powered shikar rifle, all loaded and ready.

He checked its barrels again and commenced his vigil at the window. If they wanted him, they would have to take him by force. In which case, he would make somebody pay. No chance of leading him away like a lamb.

Interrogation! That's what they termed it. But he knew what the word meant. He had seen it often in the movies. An ill-lit, unhealthy cell, coarse, unwashed criminals, crying themselves hoarse as police batons descended on their backs.

He shuddered at the prospect of similar treatment. He could not face such pain and indignities, even if he was guilty. Which meant he must fight to the death, if necessary, to keep them away.

It was a long wait, and the afternoon sun was already high in the heavens, when he made out voices coming from the direction of the house.

"He was here a short while ago," Ranjan heard his aunt say. "He must be somewhere, Inspector. No trouble. He'll go willingly. I'm certain he's innocent."

Poor Aunt Reba! She always had faith in him, shielding him in the presence of others; but when alone, she spoke out frankly what she thought.

He could see them now, standing on the facing verandah—his uncle and aunt, a sub-inspector, and two constables.

"Ranjan, where are you?" Aunt Reba called. "Come here!"

He did not answer, only glared at them from behind the half-open shutters.

"He must be in the shed," Reba Chakraborty continued. "I'll take a look."

She came down the steps into the courtyard, followed by the Sub-inspector, and was already half-way across, when he barked, "You stay out of this, Aunt!



Leave it to me. I'll deal with them."

She paused, staring in the direction of the shed. "Now what are you up to, Ranjan?" she called out. "Come over here! It will be over in a day or two."

"Yes, come!" The officer seconded her. "Come quietly. You are only wanted for interrogation."

He laughed harshly. Interrogation indeed!

"Stay where you are or I'll fire!" he threatened menacingly.

"You'll fire! Nonsense!" Aunt Reba cried. She turned to the officer. "The boy is being melodramatic. He's seen too

many thriller movies."

The man managed a weak smile, which froze on his face as there came another warning.

"Step closer and I'll shoot!"

Sub-inspector Mukherjee paused in his tracks. The old woman walked on fuming. "Stuff and nonsense, Ranjan! Open the door immediately!"

He would have to do it—just to show her he was in earnest. Raising the rifle to his shoulder, he pulled the trigger. A shot broke the afternoon stillness, and the bullet embedded itself in the

woodwork of the verandah door.

Immediately the policemen and his uncle turned indoors for cover. Reba Chakraborty fell on her face in the open yard, hysterical and screaming, as the inspector retired indoors too.

"Ranjan! What are you doing? Don't do it!" she cried.

But the sound of the weapon had only strengthened his resolve. His heart had hardened and his blood boiled.

"Stay away from me, silly old woman!" he barked. "I won't be

responsible if you get hurt."

She crawled back to the house, more stunned than afraid. In the sitting room, the policemen were having a hurried conclave.

"I'll have to ring the police station for reinforcements," Sub-inspector Mukherjee was saying. "I can see the boy will not come without a struggle."

Nirmal Chakraborty nodded, ashen-faced. "Get him out! At all costs!" he said tightly.

Night had descended, And still they had not returned. The hours dragged on. Ranjan's eyelids drooped with fatigue as he watched the silent courtyard, bathed in the light of the new moon. The closed verandah doors beyond made him wonder what his uncle and aunt were doing. Perhaps they had persuaded the police not to return.

It was a futile hope, he realised, as a flash of light through the shutters caught his attention. They had arrived. They were there, watching him from those closed portals, plotting how best to surprise him.

The sweat stood out in



beads on his brow. He lifted his arm to wipe it away, and raised his rifle to the window again, placing his head close to the sill.

With a start he noticed a half-shadowed form already making its way across the courtyard, bent low on hands and knees. In a sudden wave of nervousness he fired, and the figure retreated hastily, as the report

shattered the night.

An eerie silence followed, broken by footsteps. Ranjan recognised his uncle as he descended the verandah and began to cross the courtyard.

"Ranjan! You almost shot a police officer," Nirmal Chakraborty called out in an unsteady voice. "Come out before it's too late."

He laughed. "They'll

have to come and get me."

"Ranjan!" his uncle reasoned. "Admit it. And everything will be all right."

"I tell you, stay back," he growled, ignoring the advice

"I'm coming to get you, Ranjan! Before you can do more damage," Nirmal Chakraborty spoke in a determined tone, not faltering in his footsteps.

"I'll shoot if you step nearer," he threatened, the sweat pouring down his face in torrents, as his fingers nursed the gun

But the old man carried on unperturbed. "Shoot!" he replied calmly. "If you have the courage to do so."

"Don't make me! Don't make me!" Ranjan responded hysterically.

Insane with sudden fear and ague, he pressed

the trigger. The gun barked. Nirmal Chakraborty collapsed with a thud.

"I told you I would shoot. I told you," Ranjan cried in horror.

God knew he had not meant to. God knew he only pulled the trigger to scare him away. Curse his hand for shaking so!

He was weeping now like a child. "He made me do it. He made me do it," he repeated wildly, abandoning the weapon, and making for the door

He flung it wide open and stepped into the yard, to fall on his knees beside the prostrate body.

"Uncle, forgive me!" he moaned, as he clasped a limp hand. "Say you are all right."

"He's dead," Sub-inspector Mukherjee spoke woodenly, as he raised Ranjan to his

feet—to lead him away, calm and unresisting.

"Yes, I did do it," he admitted later at the police station. "I stole the money. Do what you want with me."

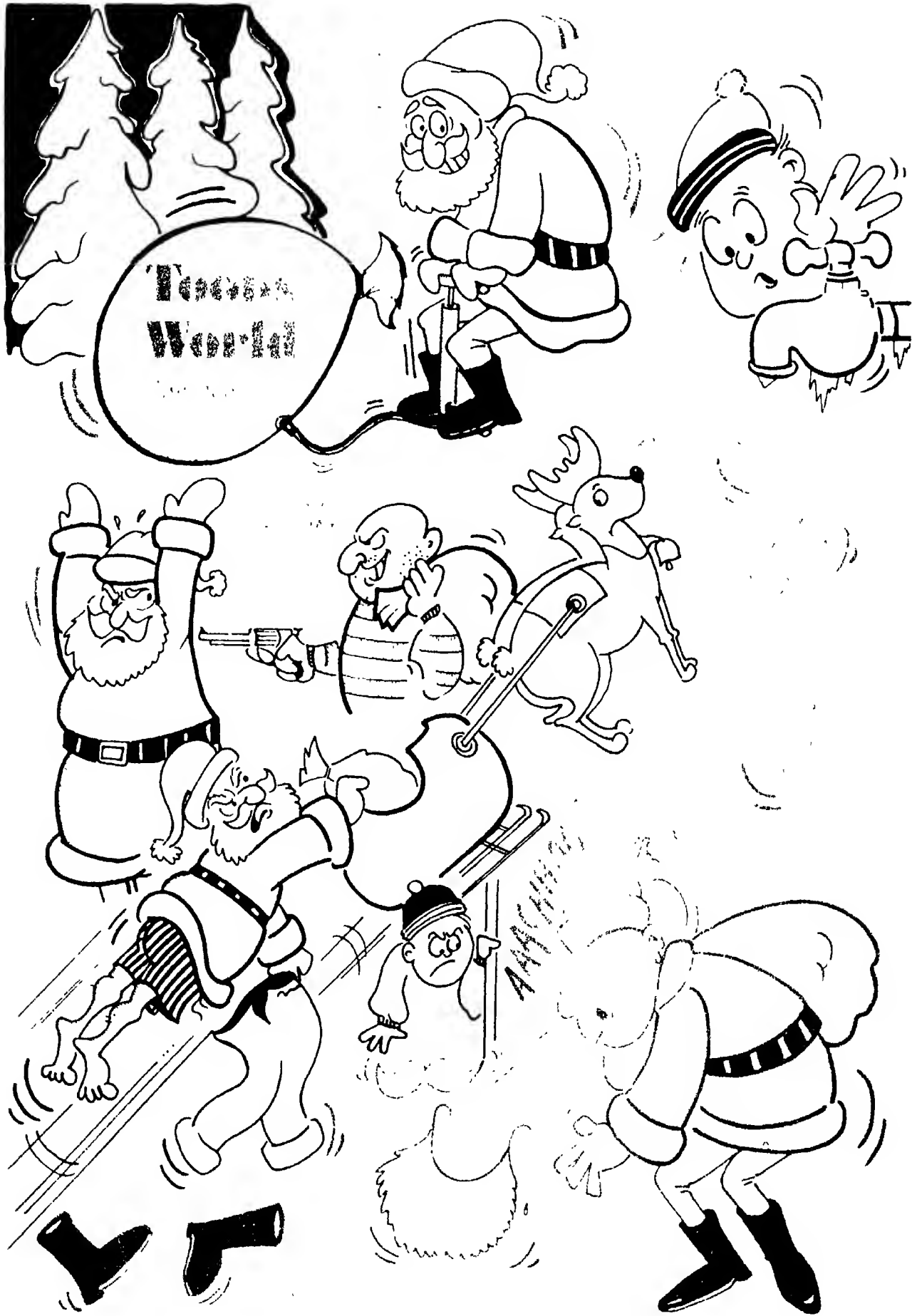
"There's nothing to do where your uncle's death is concerned," the Sub-inspector said kindly. "He died of a heart attack, we found. The shooting was not directly responsible."

"Thank God for that!" Aunt Reba acknowledged inwardly.

"It's half the battle won, when they admit it. Half-way on the road to reform," she told the Sub-inspector.

To herself she added, 'Half a battle won, in exchange for a precious life lost. A heavy price to pay for the sins of youth.' Still, if it did bring good results, she was glad the sacrifice was hers.







A TREASURE BEYOND COMRADE

Story: Cheryl Rao
Illustrations:
Ajanta Guhathakurta

"SHE'S COMING
out! Run!"
cried the

children as they left the park with Anirudh. Anirudh looked around, but could see nothing strange and no one threatening, so he stood his ground. The road was clear within minutes and he found himself alone. It was still quite early and he and his newfound friends had been planning to go to Santosh's home to watch a football match on TV. Anirudh was not really interested in football and besides, he did not know where Santosh lived, so he let his steps drag as he turned homeward.

He had shifted to Nehru Nagar a fortnight ago and he was still in the process of making friends and getting to know the layout of the Colony.



"Hello, *beta*," he heard someone say and he looked across the road to see where the voice came from. An elderly lady stood at the gate of one of the houses. She was smiling and beckoning to him. Anirudh went towards her and greeted her with a polite "Good evening".

"What is your name, son?" she asked, stretching her hand across the top of the gate and taking his in a firm grip. "I haven't seen you before."

Anirudh stammered, "I ...I'm new here. My father has been posted here from Bikaner."

"Bikaner, Rajasthan," the old lady said thoughtfully. "That's a long way off. You must be happy to get away from the heat of the desert."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Anirudh. "I was happy there and I didn't notice the heat, or even the cold."

There was something warm and sympathetic in the old lady's eyes and he found himself blurting out to her how difficult he was finding it to adjust to Pune. Everyone in school was already a part of a group and he had to squeeze his way into new friendships. The school

was so big and impersonal. No one really cared whether he was there or not. "I'm lonely here," he said. "I was never lonely in Bikaner."

The old lady listened patiently, then stretched her hand out once again and said, "I was lonely too, once, long ago. Then I learnt how to cope with being alone and now I find that it is a comfortable state. Alone but not lonely." Then she shook her head and added, "How foolish of me. I didn't introduce myself. I'm Mrs. Desai. Come on in. I've baked something today and you can taste it."

She pulled the gate inwards and Anirudh went in. Mrs. Desai turned and led him into her house. She was old, but she had a sprightly step and she moved over the cobbled pathway easily. Her house was not large. It was cool inside and there were plants lining the short corridor that led to her living room. A low table was set for two and there was a tray with a covered teapot and a quarter plate of tiny, iced cakes.

"Wow!" he exclaimed involuntarily. "This looks like the story books! I mean," he hastened to

add, "like how they describe it in story books."

She smiled. "I think you and I must have read the same books then. Who is your favourite author?"

Anirudh thought awhile. "It used to be Enid Blyton; but now I think I like the Indian writers better because they write about places I could go to and things I could do."

"You mean that you can identify with them better, don't you? Well, next time you come, I shall see that you have a proper Indian tea with *pakor*as and *gulab jamuns*. Would that be good together?" As she spoke, she handed him the plate of cakes and waited hopefully for him to bite into one and comment on it.

"Mmmm," breathed Anirudh happily, as the cake and the icing melted in his mouth. He looked at his hand almost in surprise, for it was empty and the cake was finished. The old lady saw his glance and sighed, "I can see that you enjoyed that. Have another. In fact, you ought to have them all, because you're young and these delicacies are meant for the young."

The second cake was midway to Anirudh's

mouth when he stopped. "Oh please, I feel so greedy. You ought to have the cakes too." He did not know what to call the old lady. 'Mrs. Desai' sounded too formal and 'Aunty' seemed too familiar. The longer he sat with her, the younger she seemed to get, although her hair remained white and the wrinkles on her face stayed where they were. It was her manner which was so young. She listened like another twelve-year-old.

The next evening, when Anirudh went to the park, Santosh asked him why he had not come to his place to watch the football game. "I went to Mrs. Desai's house and I forgot all about it. Anyway, I don't know where you live."

Santosh stared at him. "Mad Mama Day? You went to Mad Mama Day's house alone?" At the alarmed note in his voice, the other boys clustered around.

Anirudh was puzzled. "That house across the park," he pointed. "The old lady there did not seem mad to me."

"Oh she is, she is. You'd better not go there again."

Anirudh's mind was not on the game of baseball

that evening. He wondered what it was about Mrs. Desai that made the other boys call her mad. And why had he taken an instant liking to her? He was curious. 'Maybe if I get to know her better, I will also find out that she's crazy,' he thought. "Does she attack anyone?" he asked aloud, worried that his life could be in danger.

"What? Uh? Oh you mean Mad Mama? No way. She's harmless—but she's nuts all the same."

Anirudh resolved to find out more about the old lady for himself. That was the start of Anirudh's secret friendship. He'd linger when the game was over to pick up the stumps or find a lost ball—any excuse that would allow the others to leave ahead of him after their games of cricket and baseball in the park.

Then he would run quickly through Mrs. Desai's gate and knock on her kitchen door. She was usually there in the evenings, staring out into her garden and singing softly to herself. "Why don't you watch TV, Mama Day?" he'd asked once, after he'd told her he'd like to call her Mama Day—omitting the cruel prefix the other children

had put to her name.

"Then my imagination would get rusty with disuse and I will not have so much fun travelling all over this planet and others, in this time period, way back in the past and way ahead into the future."

Anirudh knew that if his friends heard remarks like this they would say that it confirmed her madness: but somehow, he knew exactly what she meant because he too was a dreamer.

The years passed. Anirudh's father got another transfer, but this time, he did not take his wife and son with him. Anirudh's mother had opened her own dental clinic just outside the Colony and she had very little time to ask Anirudh what his dreams were. It was taken for granted that he would study to become an engineer like his father or a doctor like his mother.

"What would you like to be?" asked Mama Day one evening, when his Maths and Science tuitions were over and he had stopped at her place on his way home.

"Something to do with Art," said Anirudh unhesitatingly. "A cartoonist or an



illustrator or a designer. But everyone calls these sissy things—jobs that don't require brains." He didn't add that no one had asked his opinion at home. No one had given him any choice so far. All he knew of design and art was what he had found out from his classmates and friends, who were also heading in the doctor-engineer direction.

"Far from it, my dear," laughed Mrs. Desai. "You need a tremendous amount of talent to be any of those things and you'll have to put in a lot of hard work as well. It is off the beaten track, so

people do not understand what is involved in such a career. Don't let their remarks put you off. Can you work hard and take a lot of disappointment before you make your mark?"

Anirudh thought about it. "I don't know. I guess if I want it badly enough, I'll do it."

"Yes, that attitude is good. Be sure of what you want and then go out and get it."

"Without trampling over anyone," Anirudh added laughingly, because Mama Day was always talking about caring for other people's feelings.

"Yes," she said slowly, suddenly rather sad.

"What is it?" Anirudh asked.

"Nothing. Nothing. I'm just thinking that soon you'll have flown the nest as well."

Anirudh knew that she was thinking of her own child—a daughter who had married and settled in Canada years ago and hardly ever came to India to see her mother.

"I won't go far away," Anirudh assured her. "I don't want to leave familiar places and the friends I care about."

"There comes a time when we all must leave,"

she said. She went into her bedroom and after a few moments, emerged with a box in her hands. It was a dirty metallic grey and looked old and worthless. "This is for you, Anirudh," she said, handing it over to him. "Treasure it and you will find a treasure beyond compare."

Anirudh smiled. He knew what she meant. Together, hadn't they woven any number of treasure stories in their imagination over the years? Usually, they had zeroed in on some stray item in the old lady's house. Then, each tried to out do the other in making up a tale about it.

Anirudh took the box home. When he was alone, he took a damp cloth and tried to clean it. It did not get much brighter but rubbing it gently made him get the feel of the box. "It seems so old and so cared for. I love it." He opened the latch and looked inside. The box was lined with red velvet and it had a little tray inside. Under the tray there was a little more space, where he could store his keepsakes.

"It is really a treasure box," he exclaimed to Mrs. Desai the next time he met her. "I have

polished it well and kept it on my table. And everytime I look at it, I think of a different story about where it came from.

"Where DID it come from?"

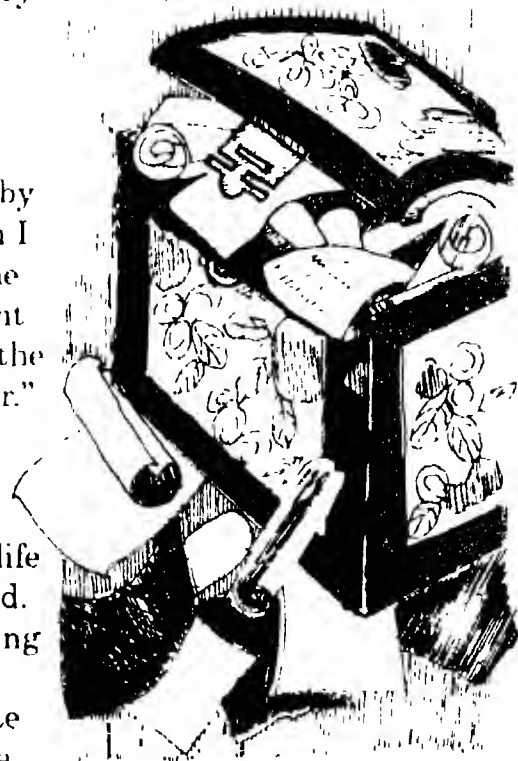
"It was given to me by my grandmother when I was small. She said she had got it from her aunt who had married into the royal family of Jodhpur."

"So it could be very valuable," exclaimed Anirudh.

"What you value in life is valuable," she replied. "The secret is in knowing what to value."

Anirudh did not quite get her meaning but he nodded wisely and went home and had another look at the box. To his surprise, as he looked at it, a story of a beautiful girl and a handsome prince came to his mind and he sat down and wrote it out, just to see how it looked in black and white. Then he illustrated it himself and tucked it away inside the box.

Over the months, many more sheets of paper joined those first ones. Anirudh's imagination was always working and soon, the box began to overflow. Because there was no more space to keep his stories, Anirudh



sent them to a magazine. To his delight, they were accepted for publication. His illustrations were appreciated so much that he was asked to do some for other writers' stories as well.

It was a dream come true for him—but he could not tell the person who had made it all happen because she had gone to Canada to her daughter's home, for a holiday. At first she had written to him, but then she broke off the correspondence quite suddenly and his letters were returned undelivered. Who knew if

she had received his letter telling her of his successes? She had not replied. Maybe she wanted to break all ties with home. Maybe she had decided not to return to India. Anirudh stopped looking out for her each time he passed her house. The pretty cottage fell into disrepair and Anirudh could not bear to pass that way.

It was only when he saw the "For Sale" notice in the Colony office some years later that he ventured towards the house where he had once been a frequent visitor. The weeds had been cleared, the windows were open and there were sounds of living from within. Trying to suppress his excitement, for now he was a grown twenty-year-old man, he went around to the kitchen door and knocked, as he always had.

He was about to call out, "Mama Day" when the door opened and he looked into a stern, unfamiliar face. Anirudh was taken aback. "Uh-uh, is Mrs. Desai here? I'm Anirudh."

The stern face relaxed. "Anirudh! Why, come in. I've heard about you, but I expected a small boy. I am Mrs. Desai's

daughter."

"You mean, the one who she went to visit?"

"Yes," the lady smiled. "The only one." Her smile faded as she saw Anirudh glance behind her in anticipation. "But didn't you know?"

"Know what?"

"My mother passed away peacefully in her sleep one night, when she was with me."

Anirudh was stunned. "Mama Day?" he gasped, the tears pricking his eyelids. Unthinkingly, he sat down on his favourite chair and stared at the entrance to Mama Day's bedroom as though he expected her to walk out

at any moment in her quick, sprightly way.

"She didn't suffer, you know," a voice said softly, close to his ear. "It took me some time to realise that myself. I left the house where she died because I could not bear to think that she had come there after so much persuasion and then she had hardly stayed. But slowly I realised that she was at peace, and I had to go on."

"She thought about you a lot. There was an unfinished letter to you at her bedside. I brought it back with me although I did not have your address or even your surname."



She went inside and he heard her rummaging in her bags. She came out with a piece of paper in her hands. "Here. This is the letter."

Anirudh stood up. "If you don't mind, I'll take it home."

"Certainly. It is yours. I'm just glad that I could deliver it," she assured him.

In the privacy of his room, Anirudh opened the letter. It was brief and obviously unfinished. "I am so happy for you, dear Anirudh," he read. "You tell me that the box I gave you has become a treasure chest and has provided you with an endless fund of stories. Keep writing. Keep believing. And you will realise that it is YOU—your heart and your mind—that is the treasure."

"But if you look carefully at the box, you will find..." She had not finished the letter. Perhaps she had meant to write some more the following day, but had not woken up to see it.

Anirudh looked carefully at the box as she had instructed him to. What had she been trying to tell him? The box was so old and worn that now the sheet of beaten metal

that covered it was coming off in places. Unconsciously, Anirudh peeled away a corner of it. All along, he had thought that the metal had been pressed into the shape of leaves and flowers and scrolls and then stuck on the box. But now he realised that the box itself was inlaid with stones and wire and the thin metal sheet had just been flattened and fixed over them to take their shape.

Mrs. Desai's words came back to him in a flash. "Treasure it and you will find a treasure beyond compare." "These are real gems and real gold wire," he thought to himself. Mrs. Desai had



not meant the treasures of the imagination when she had given him the box. She had known that it was priceless.

Hers had been a gift beyond compare. A double treasure that was more valuable than anything he had ever received. She had recognised herself in the shy, awkward boy she had befriended and always, she had wanted him to believe in himself. He had found that confidence with her help.

Anirudh understood. He picked up his box and put the letter inside among the papers that were covered with his drawings and his jottings. Slowly, he closed the box and smoothed back the metal sheet so that the gems were covered. Again he recalled what she had said when she had given the box to him. "Treasure it and you will find a treasure beyond compare."

Anirudh had found a treasure trove of love and friendship that reached beyond the grave and would be with him all his life.

He rested his face on his arms and wept with a mingling of joy and sorrow for all that he had gained and all that he had lost.



Reader of the month:
Dipavali Debroy

Illustrations:
Ajanta Guhathakurta

AFTER I finished my English paper for the Higher Secondary Examination, I flung the book *Oliver Twist* away. "I'll never touch it again," I cried.

For three whole years I had been at it. Unravelling the involved sentences, looking up unknown words in the dictionary, memorizing "who said this to whom", writing out answers, explanations and character-sketches. I was fed up. If there was one book I disliked

thoroughly at that point of time, it was *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. I had no choice but to make a thorough study of it. But now that I was through with school, I was through with *Oliver Twist* as well.

My resolution never to touch it again was determinedly firm.

Yet, over the years, I have broken it again and again.

Oliver Twist first appeared as a serial in a magazine in 1837-39. In 1838, it was published as a book titled *Oliver Twist*, or, *The Parish Boy's Progress*. When Charles Dickens wrote it, he was a young man of

about 25. He had a childhood troubled by poverty, hunger, abandonment, child labour and even imprisonment. These memories were still fresh when he penned *Oliver Twist*.

Oliver Twist, at birth, was described as an 'item of mortality'. He was an orphan in a workhouse, with his mother dead and father unknown. His entry into the world was shrouded in mystery and his early life was wrapped in gloom. He was deprived of nutrition, and tortured physically and psychologically.

The workhouse *Oliver* lived in was worse than

a prison, and its officer, Mr Bumble, worse than a jail-warden. Oliver did not even have the right to ask for a second helping of the watery gruel they were served at the workhouse. When he made so bold as to ask for 'more', it was regarded as a shocking act of revolt.

Workhouse authorities tried to put the revolt down and that led to a series of events which catapulted Oliver into the clutches of a wily old Jew named Fagin, but found the patronage of Mr Brownlow. He came to know the worst of the criminal underworld and the best of the upper classes. Fagin was the head of a huge racket of pickpockets, thieves and robbers. His speciality was training children for the task of picking pockets. A sinister stranger named Monks ganged up with him to try (unsuccessfully) to make a pickpocket of Oliver.

An amazing series of coincidences and chance encounters followed, leading Oliver to discover his parentage, a half-brother, an aunt and an inheritance too!

Secret meetings, gory

events, acts of bribery, intrigue and violence, clutter the pages. Ultimately, the air is cleared and the wicked brought to justice. Oliver's troubles come to an end.

But, for long, in my mind, the image of Oliver Twist remained that of a hollow-eyed, hungry and helpless creature asking in vain for 'more' of thin gruel. Why?

Why did the peace and prosperity that descended upon Oliver towards the end of the book not register in my mind?

Why is it that I did not remember much about the benevolent Mr Brownlow and his friend, about the gentle Rose and her gallant admirer, but retained every detail about Mr Bumble, Noah Claypole, The Artful Dodger, Bill Sikes and Nancy?

The answer, I now realise, lies all around me.

After decades of planning, with its stress on heavy industries, India has developed uncanny resemblances with England after the Industrial Revolution. Factories spewing black smoke, orphanages

riddled with corruption, children begging and picking pockets...the features of 19th century England are all there as we pass on to the 21st century. In India we meet Oliver Twists, Noah Claypoles and Artful Dodgers every day. We cannot walk the streets without running into them. They beset us at crossings, outside restaurants and cinema halls, playgrounds and temples. Every now and then newspapers carry reports of irregularities in orphanages and atrocities in 'juvenile delinquent homes'.

With so many real-life Oliver Twists all requiring 'more', how could I think of the original one as living happily ever after?

And what choice did I have but to take up my *Oliver Twist* again and again? Read the passages which still haunted me?

Yet, now, when I read it, I try to read it for the optimism it contains. I think I missed it earlier for the more obvious gloom and squalor and pathos that there is in the novel.

Oliver did survive. He did rise above his circumstances.

That is not entirely due to the intricacies of the plot. The string of coincidences and accidental meetings is really quite dubious.

But what is undoubted is the fact that Oliver Twist, 'the workhus 'un' did have in him the spirit of survival.

There were other kids in the workhouse, also starved and beaten. But they had not 'asked for more' like Oliver had.

There was poor, sweet Dick, for instance, who had died of workhouse neglect. He had not been able to run away—get out of it—like Oliver had.

In London were kids like The Artful Dodger and Charlie Bates—successful trainees of Fagin, the Jew. They had not been able to resist Fagin's attempts to corrupt them—like Oliver had.

So Oliver had contained a spark of fire in him that all the polluted air of London could not put out.

True, he had—unlike most real-life orphans—an inheritance waiting for him. But it is to Oliver's own credit that he could come into his inheritance.

True, it was not

Oliver's own resourcefulness, but the aid of powerful patrons which defeated his half-brother Monk's intrigues. But it was his own strength of innocence that won him those friends in the first place.

Oliver Twist is not all about a child's helplessness in a cruel world of men in an age of machines. *Oliver Twist* is about a child's power to survive. Our English teacher at school had pointed this out to us. But I have taken time to realise it for myself.

See how much time it takes you.

Reducing the Risk

CEE-NFS

*Surveys and reports reveal that **accumulation of DDT in the body tissues of Indians is the highest in the world.** Also, that high levels of DDT and other pesticides are found in many vegetables, fruits and cereals in our markets. As a consumer you cannot reduce the presence of pesticides in these products, but you can take some precautions to minimize the intake of these harmful substances.*

Wash vegetables, fruits and cereals thoroughly, at least three times. Or, to make doubly sure that you remove any lingering traces of pesticides, wash with a 5 per cent solution of soda-bicarb or vinegar, and then rinse with water.

With such widespread use of pesticides, eating raw vegetables may prove more hazardous than healthful. Cooking helps to break down some of the harmful chemicals in the pesticides.

Remove the outer leaves of cabbage and lettuce, and peel fruits and root vegetables to avoid consuming pesticides sticking to their surface.

If you have a kitchen garden minimize use of pesticides. Remember, pests aren't their only victims. You and your family too are at risk.

CROSSROADS 12

Memorably Yours!

S.S.

As we conclude this year's crosswords, designed to set you off on quests for information and knowledge, we make time to remember some of the great women achievers of India—past and present. Test yourselves and see how well you know them.

CLUES

Across

1. The first Indian woman to scale Mt. Everest (9,3)
5. The 'High Priestess of Indian Culture' and wife of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya (10,14)
7. Wife of the Father of Our Nation (8,6)
9. Vocalist supreme, winner of the Magasaysay Award (1,1,12)
10. The woman Prime Minister of India (6,6)
11. The founder of the Home Rule League (5,6)
14. India's representative to the United Nations (13,6)
15. Valiant freedom

- fighter, instrumental in organising the Monkey Brigade (6,5)
16. Winner of Magasaysay Award and Padma Bhushan, member of the Rajya Sabha and the moving spirit behind SEWA—Self Employed Women's Association (3,5)
17. Reputed Punjabi writer and Sahitya Akademi Award winner (6,6)

Down

1. The person who unfurled the Indian National Flag in Stuttgart, Germany (9,4)
2. Albanian born nun who made India her home,

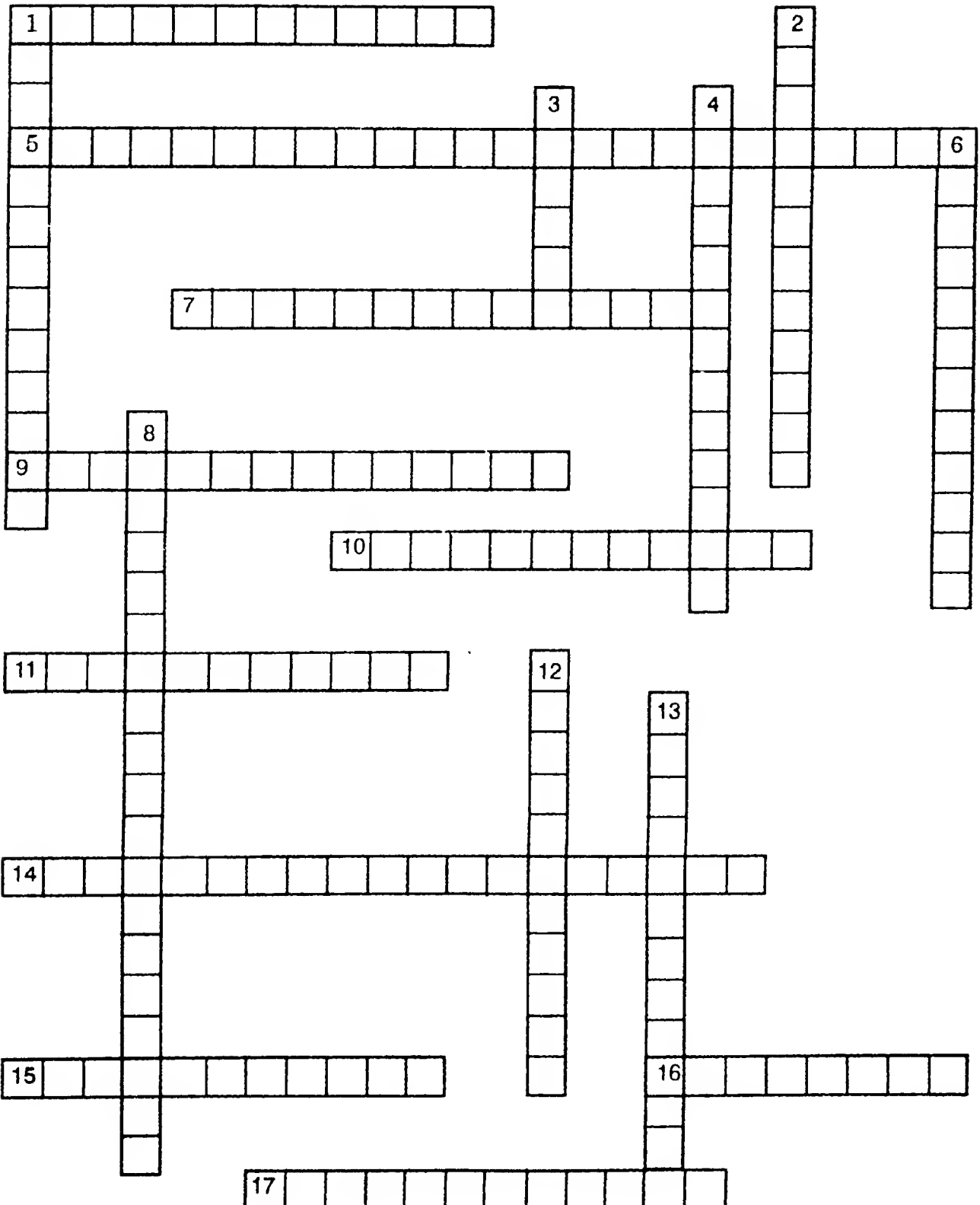
- founding the 'Missionaries of Charity' for destitutes in Calcutta (6,6)
3. Ace athlete (1,1,4)
4. The Nightingale of India (8,5)
6. Freedom fighter, a front runner in the Quit India Movement, who died recently (5,4,3)
8. Founder of 'Kalakshetra' (7,4,8)
12. Committed activist of the Narmada Bachao Andolan working against the Sardar Sarovar Project (5,6)
13. Noted Hindi poetess whose collection of poems 'Yaama' won her the Jnanpeth Award (8,5)

Hurry up and send in the completed crossword. The first all-correct entry wins a year's free subscription to Children's World. Last date for receiving entries: December 25, 1996. Answers in February 1997 issue. No all-correct entries to Crossroads 10, Mythologically Yours!

CROSSROADS 12

Memorably Yours!

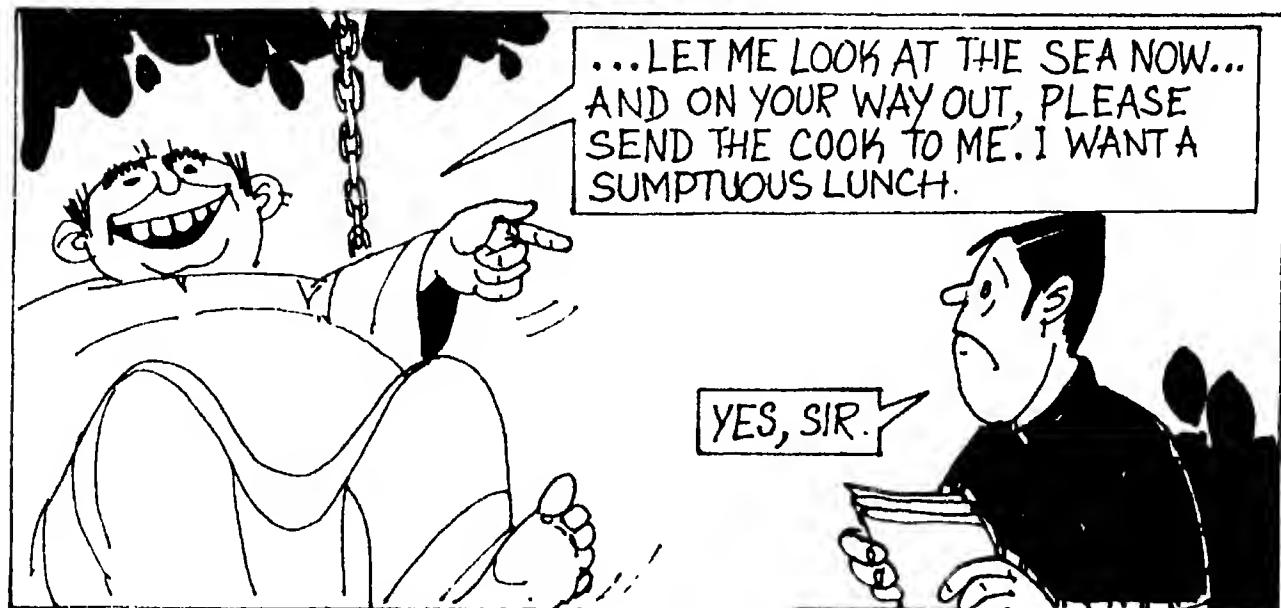
S.S.

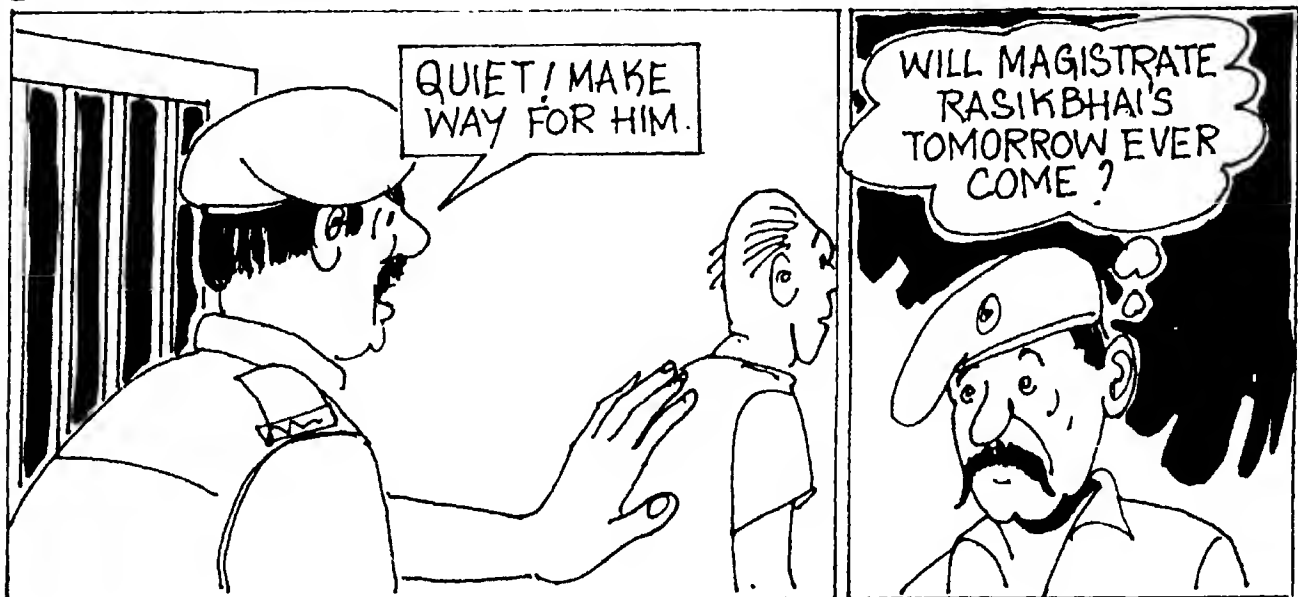
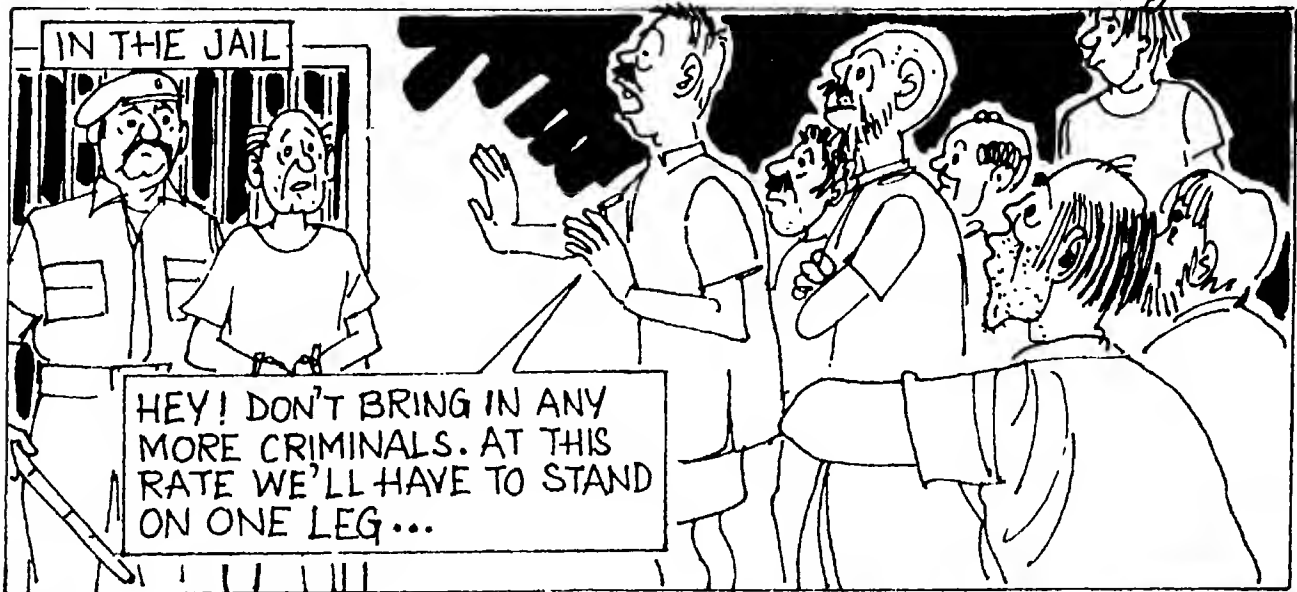


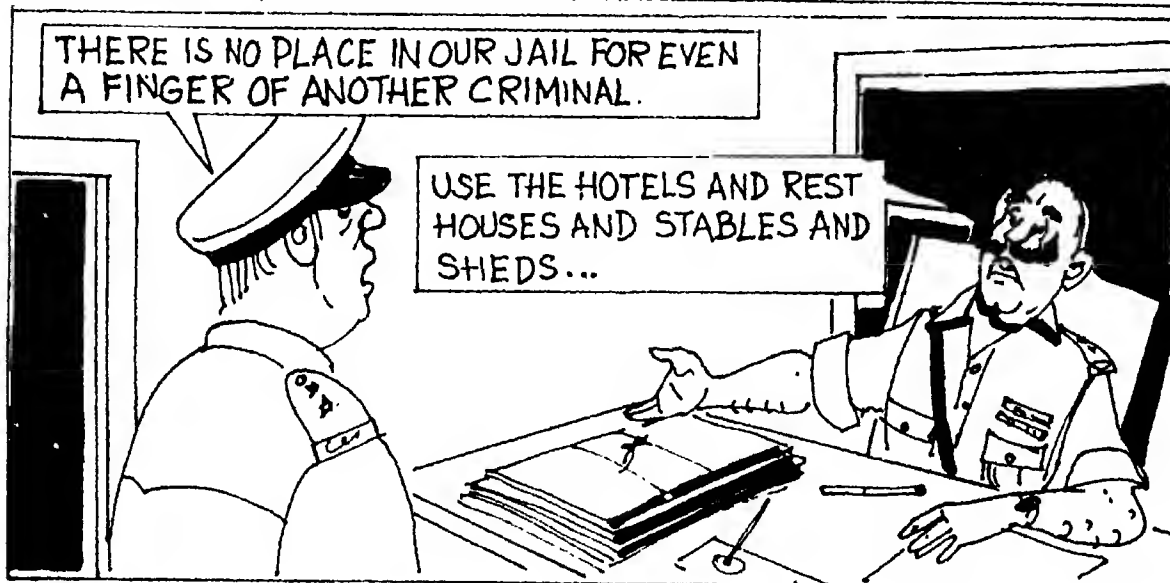
RASIKBHAJI TOMORROW

STORY: SHALAN SAVUR

ILLUSTRATIONS: *Beejee*







ONE MORNING, CHIEF JUSTICE
ACHARYA ARRIVES IN KILWADA.

HOTEL MANAGER

SORRY, SIR, THERE ARE NO
ROOMS AVAILABLE.

LET ME TRY
ELSEWHERE...

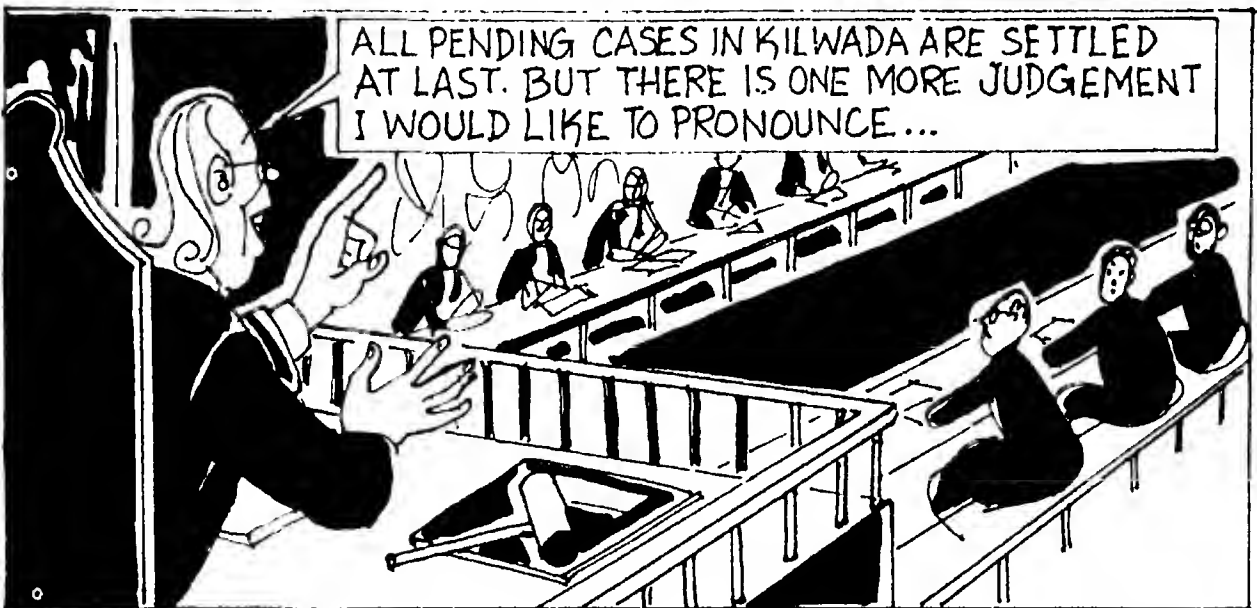
ARRIVING AT A FORT

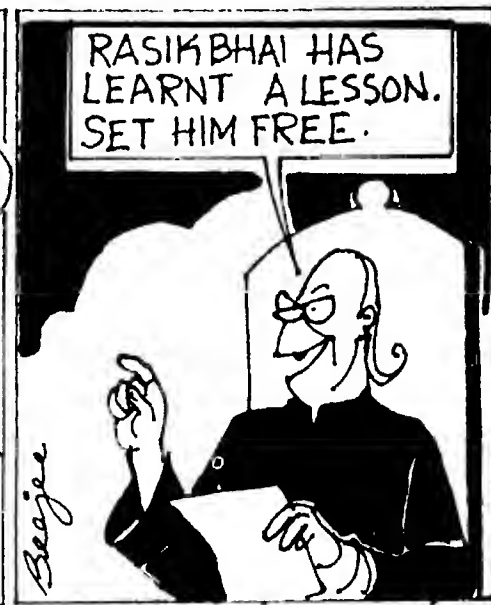
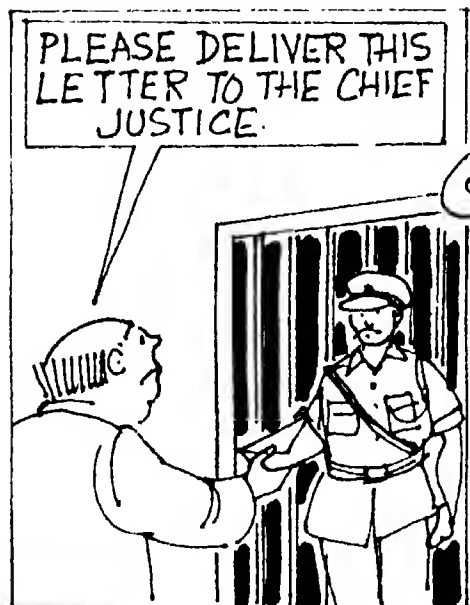
WHAT IS THIS? WHY ARE THESE
HANDCUFFED PRISONERS HANGING
AROUND HERE? AND THERE SEEM
TO BE SO MANY OF THEM.

WHAT ARE ALL OF YOU DOING
HERE?

ADMIRING THE
SUNSET!

IN THE COURT HOUSE





THE END



Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

FOR ELEVEN months we have been going round Toyland. We have seen lots of toys. Yet lots more remain to be seen.

But we will stop here. We cannot go on and on. For Toyland is almost endless.

Toyland begins wherever toys are—in a village, town, city. You can enter it as and when you like. And you can go on as far as you please, come back—and go again.

On each visit you will find, besides the old toys, something new—new, novel, quaint, curious and exotic.

Before we go back, we shall take another good look around. Diwali has just gone by. It was a time for gifts and toys. Now the Christmas spirit

is in the air. It is also a great time for toys.

Christmas is celebrated all over the world. The whole world turns into a toy bazaar

What is that figure? White-bearded and red-robed, with a bag slung over his shoulder, he stands smiling in a show-window. It is Santa Claus, who brings toys and other gifts to children.

As the custom demands, children hang their stockings on Christmas-eve. When they get up in the morning, they find the toys they had asked for in or near the stockings.

Santa has brought cheer to children for centuries. But of late he must be in a fix. From folk toys to the modern, there is a bewildering

variety of toys.

While looking at or playing with toys, you should try to learn or trace their history. Take the ball. Its story goes back to the dim past. It is among the earliest toys children played with thousands of years ago.

In a simple way, toys teach you science too. Find out what makes glass marbles bounce on the floor. Or what force makes the top spin.

Folk toys come in a big variety. They make a fascinating study. If you like, you can make their study your career.

Or you may study dolls—dolls down the ages. Or automatic and battery-operated toys. Or various puzzles and games. Or toys that are aids to education. Or you may learn toy-making. Or

specialise in making dresses and accessories for dolls and dolls' houses. Quizzing is the 'in' thing these days. You may make a toy quiz yourself asking questions like why teddy is called so, or after whom the Barbie doll is named. Or which storybook tells of the adventures of a puppet.

In time you may be able to write articles, poems and stories on toys.

If you are good at photography, you may take pictures of toys. Later, even make short films. Did you see the Walt Disney animation film, "The Toy"?

You should not only play with toys but also take care of them. If a toy breaks, try to mend it. Mending a toy is an art

worth learning. It makes you a sort of toy doctor.

If you outgrow your toys, do not throw them away. Keep them in a cabinet or arrange them on shelves in your room. Old toys have their own charm or value.

The older some toys grow, the more valuable they become. Only some time back dolls from a private collection fetched a fabulous price in London.

In case you cannot keep your old toys, give them to someone interested in them. Or gift them to the children who need them. In this way you will bring joy to some poor or less fortunate kids.

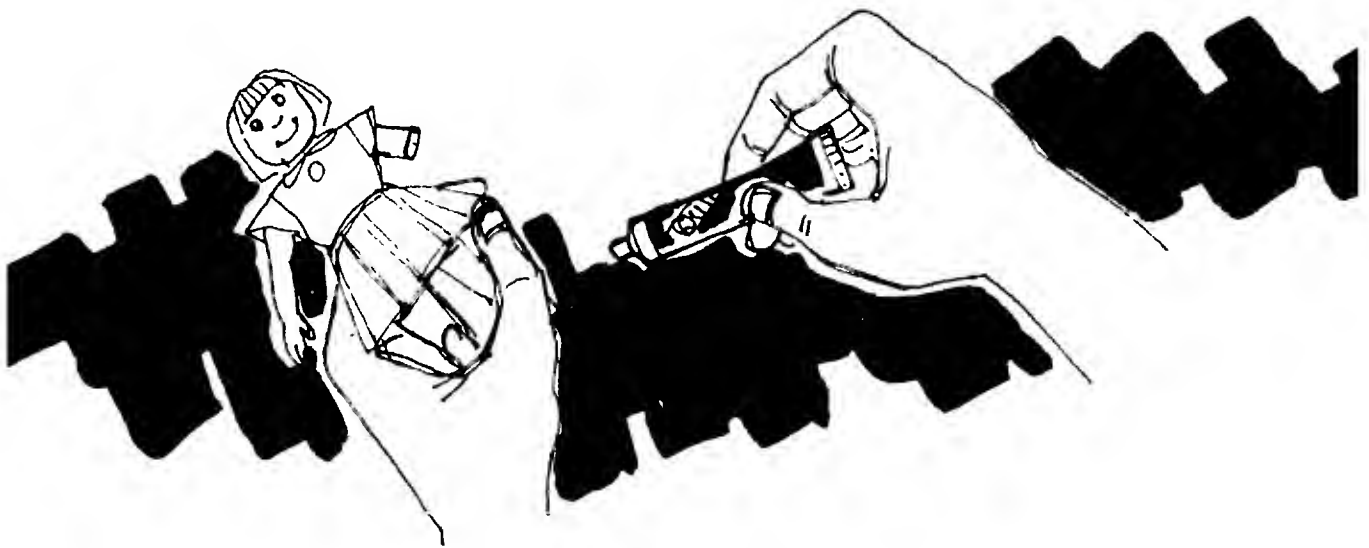
You may also make your own toys—of clay, paper or cardboard. They

may not be so good to begin with. But soon you will make better and better toys.

There are books on toy-making. Some individuals and toy workshops run short training courses. Or you may watch the toy-makers at work at fairs and exhibitions.

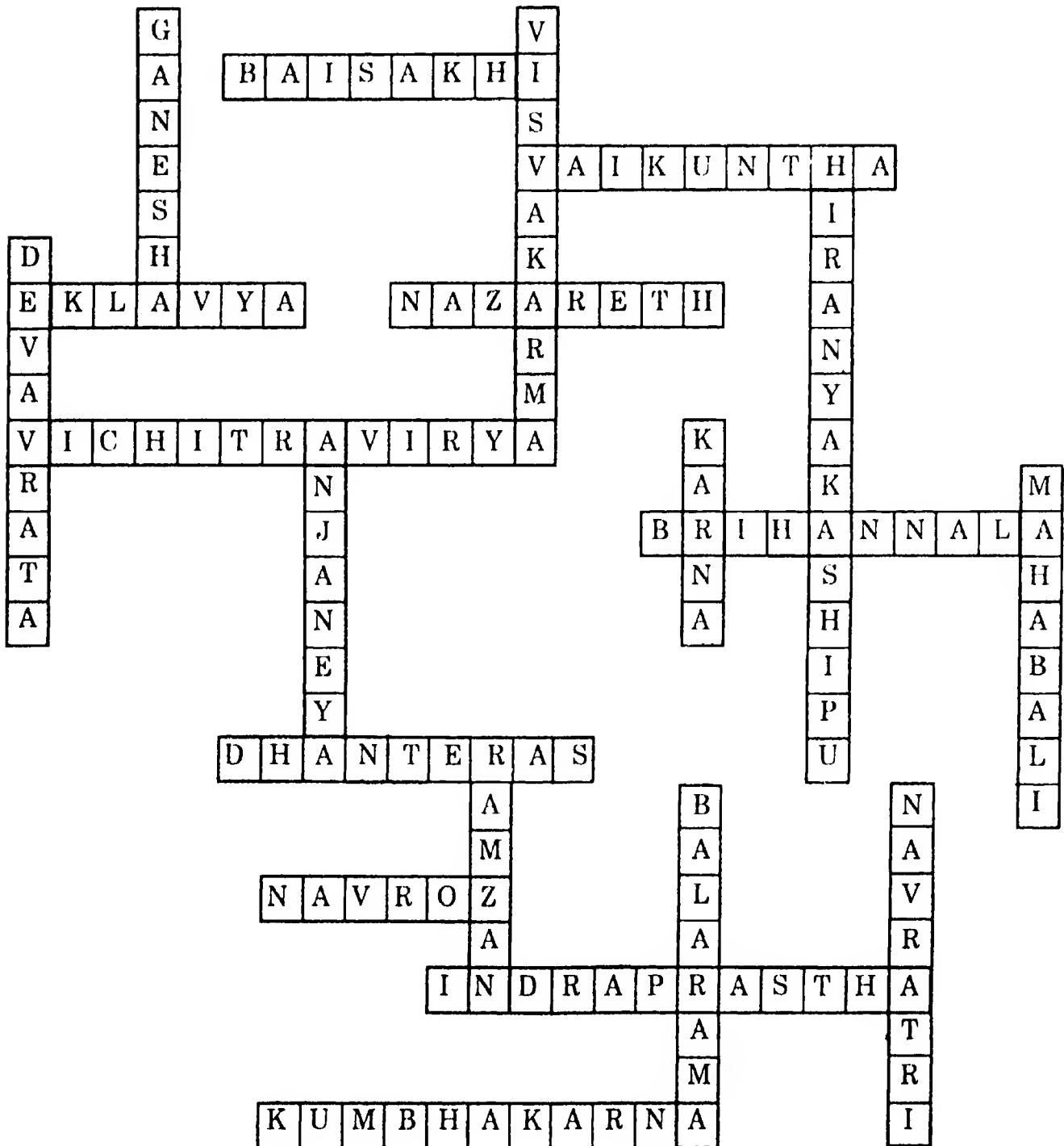
Even if you just play with toys, it is its own reward. Playing gives pleasure. It relieves your boredom or fatigue. After playing for some time, you will work or feel better...

We call off our trip at this point. But you can go to Toyland whenever you are in the mood to. No passport or visa is required for going there. It is a free and frolicsome trip.



Answers to CROSSROADS 10

Mythologically Yours!

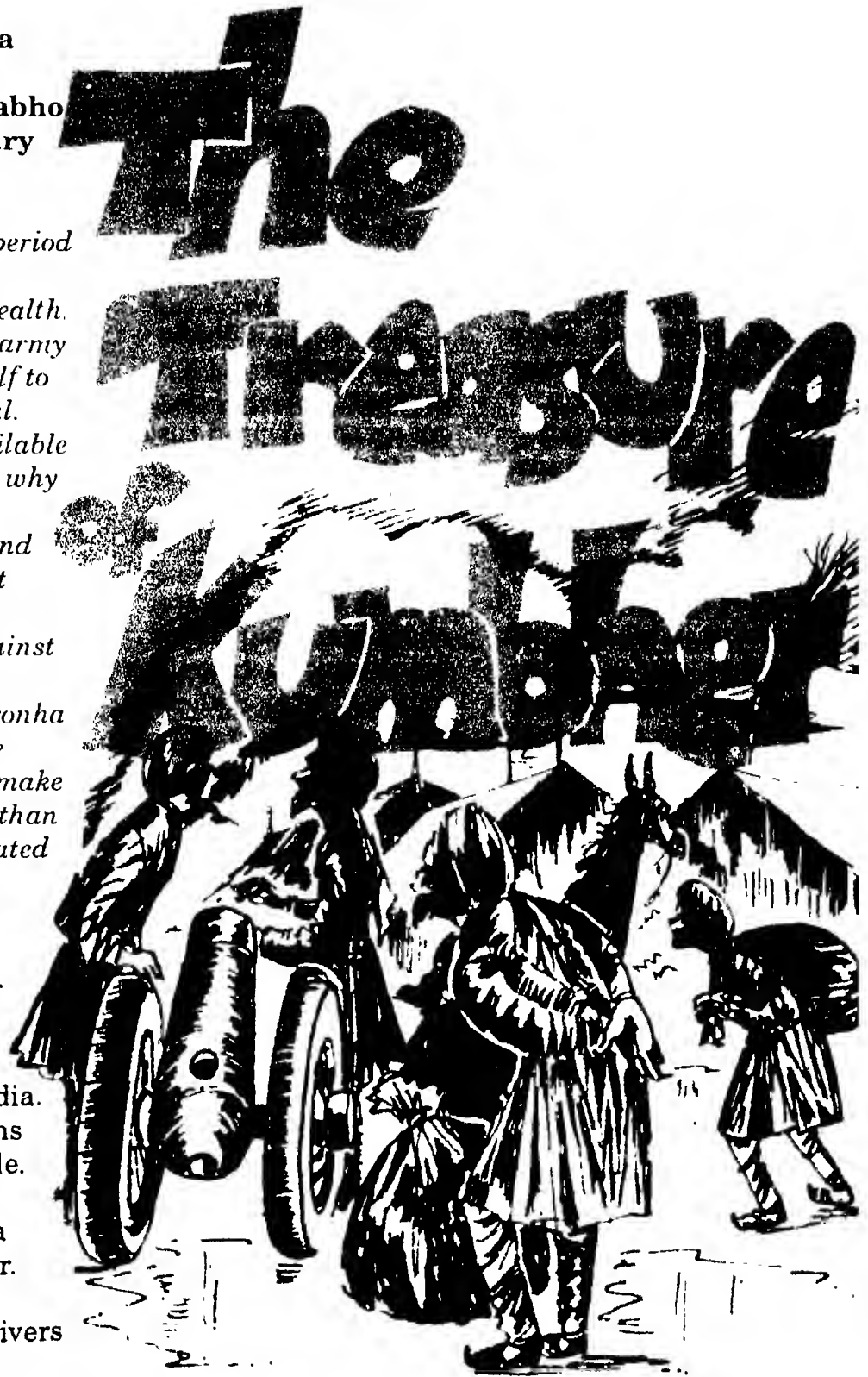


**Story: Krishna
Narayan
Illustrations: Nilabho
Dhar Chowdhury**

Senor Noronha is Portuguese. Over a period of time, in India he gathers enormous wealth. He puts together an army and promotes himself to the rank of a General. His services are available for a price. Which is why Madhoji Sindhia, a Maratha chieftain and ally of Raja Balwant Singh, wants him to defend Kumbher against Ismail Beg. Though reluctant, Senor Noronha is forced to agree. He decides, however, to make sure that he is more than adequately compensated for his services.

Part 5

After the dry heat of summer comes the monsoon, an annual feature unique to India. The monsoon sustains life in the countryside. For two months the heavens open up in a continuous downpour. Trees sprout leaves afresh. The mighty rivers rise and flow beyond their banks. The farmers breathe a prayer for this bounty of nature and sow their fields.



For the soldiers, however, the rains are more a curse than a blessing. Huge areas of land turn into sheets of water, impossible to cross. Tracks become running streams. Carts and gun-carriages bog themselves down in the mud. Tents leak incessantly, water-logging the ground beneath, animals fall sick, and campaigns are either delayed or called off. It is a time of painful waiting.

Ismail Beg sat brooding in his tent. His fortunes were at their lowest ebb. His assault on Kumbher two months ago had ended disastrously. He was unable to pay even his depleted army, and they were deserting him in droves. His former associates now spurned him. Only Rukhayat Khan, sworn enemy of Raja Balwant Singh, had offered him a helping hand, and permitted him to camp on the outskirts of Najibabad. Ismail Beg knew that he would have to repay the favour heavily when the time came.

He needed money badly. If only he could capture the coffers of Kumbher! A pain that

was almost physical in its intensity, gripped him as he remembered how he had been routed by Raja Balwant Singh. To top it all, now there was Senor Noronha, the foreigner, appointed to defend the city!

In an effort to shake off his mood of depression, Ismail Beg got up and stepped out of the tent. He was compactly built, slim-hipped and well-muscled. There was a certain roguish handsomeness about him that masked his vicious, unscrupulous nature. The man knew neither fear nor mercy.

He turned to his favourite pastime of trying to imagine the treasure hidden in the bowels of Kumbher. He called one of his guards. "Get me that rascal of a mason," he said. The fellow returned in a few moments leading a blind,

old man. This was the head mason who, many years ago, had supervised the building of the strongroom that held Kumbher's treasure. Raja Balwant Singh had directed that the room be built in utmost secrecy. Even the workmen were brought to the site and taken away blindfolded. None but the king and the head mason knew the details of its construction. The king had paid well to ensure the mason's silence.

Alas! the mason turned greedy. A few years later, under the pretext of repairing the walls, he had loosened some bricks in the ceiling in one corner of the room. Then, under cover of darkness, he had returned. What he did not know was that the king had installed an independent safety device, a trip wire that



set off an alarm in the royal bedchamber in case of intrusion.

The mason with his bulging sack was caught red-handed as he crawled out of the strongroom.

More in sorrow than in anger, Raja Balwant Singh punished the man who had so betrayed his trust. The mason was blinded and driven out of the city. Ismail Beg, who came to know of the incident, promptly located him and took custody of the helpless man.

"Tell me about the treasure, you old fool," he said. He had heard the mason's story a dozen times before, yet he hungered to hear it again.

"The room is large and lined with rows of heavy wooden chests," said the mason, blinking his sightless eyes. "Each chest overflows with gold, diamonds, pearls, coins, a sea of wealth that dazzles the eye! Verily, it is a sight for the gods!"

The description never failed to send the blood rushing to Ismail Beg's brain. He stood still, his mouth open, his eyes star-struck. "It is all there within the palace,

is it not?"

"Yes, yes! There is a trapdoor in one of the rooms, I forget which, and below it is a ladder that goes down and there lies the treasure, the likes of which no man has ever seen!"

There was a pause. Suddenly, Ismail Beg swung his hand and hit the old man across the face. The man staggered back with the force of the blow. "And how do I get into the palace, you doddering goat! You and your tall tales! Get out of my sight before I wring your scrawny neck!"

He turned on his heel and swept into the tent. He was filled with an unreasonable fury. Why was there no communication from Kunwar Singh for so long? Had the fat fool changed his mind? Was he dead, or in prison after being caught helping the enemy? How long did he, Ismail Beg, have to wait in this fashion?

* * *

The rains had come and gone.

There is no autumn in the cycle of seasons in northern India. After the rains which lash the countryside during the

months of July and August, there follows a period of sultry weather comparable to summer, in some ways more uncomfortable. The air is heavy and humid, the swamps breed mosquitoes and disease. There is little to be cheerful about.

An uneasy calm prevailed over Kumbher. Ten weeks had passed since Ismail Beg's abortive attack, eight since Senor Noronha had set up camp at Kumbher's frontiers. On the surface everything was normal; trade was brisk in the market-place, tax revenues were sizeable, a bumper crop was predicted. There was no cause for concern, yet Raja Balwant Singh, with his experience in matters of state, could not shake off his nagging worry. Was it pessimism born of old age? Seated in the privacy of his bedchamber, the king forced himself to analyse the reasons for his uneasiness.

First, there was the curious behaviour of Senor Noronha. The king's repeated overtures had drawn no response from him. His proposal that they meet and

evolve a strategy against Ismail Beg was met with silence. Indeed, were it not for Madhoji's assurances that Senor Noronha was an ally, the king might well have concluded that he was more foe than friend.

Secondly, of Ismail Beg there was no further sign. It was uncharacteristic of the man to disappear in this fashion. Like a jungle cat that hurled itself against its opponent, mindless of its own safety, it was expected that Ismail Beg would strike at Kumbher again, and yet again. Why was he lying low?

The last, but not the least of the reasons for the king's concern was that Janki Devi and Kunwar Singh had been released from house arrest the previous day.

Since that fateful night when Kunwar Singh was unmasked as traitor, the king had passed orders preventing mother and son from leaving their residence. The king's action set the town abuzz with rumour and gossip, which grew more strident and malicious as the days passed. The citizens and even the militia took up rival positions, for Janki Devi too

commanded a loyal following. Raja Balwant Singh soon realised that the strife in the royal house threatened the very stability of his state. Reluctantly, he set his sister and nephew free.

He now awaited the consequences.

The king sighed and rose, and wondered if he was not seeing dangers where none existed. In any event, he decided to take one more precaution.

He walked along the corridors, taking a right and then a left turn till he reached the far end of the palace. This part of the building was quiet and deserted. The corridor ended at a closed door. Outside, against the wall, sat an old woman. At the sight of the king she scrambled to her feet, startled. The king bade her open the door.

Like always, the stench of rotting flesh hit him like a blow. The room was bare except for a cot, on which lay a figure swathed in white. Maggots swarmed all over the sheet. It was a sight that never failed to revolt the king.

The body that lay inert on the bed was the matriarch of the ruling family, Raja Balwant

Singh's great-aunt. She was stricken by leprosy, a feared disease of those times, for which there was no cure. Over the years, leprosy had nibbled away at her flesh and bones. The king had summoned every healer, every physician in the land to cure her but in vain. The affliction had forced the lady into isolation. There was no hope of her survival, and she was consigned to the care of an old maidservant who cleaned her body everyday and waited for her to die. Nobody else dared approach this corner of the palace for fear of contracting the horrible disease.

Raja Balwant Singh came out and shut the door behind him. He motioned to the maidservant to follow him to the ground floor. He then led her past the rooms of state, beyond the guest rooms and music rooms, to an isolated cubicle at the rear of the palace.

"The Rani shall spend her last days here," he told the maidservant. "I shall have a cot put in. Bring her down tonight, and look after her as before."

Jai Singh and

Chandravati noticed only a couple of days later that the dying woman had been shifted. They wondered why, as did the rest of the domestic staff. A week later the whole thing was forgotten.

* * *

Janki Devi lived in the tree-lined avenue that wound down from the palace to the main road of Kumbher. Her residence was a gloomy structure that stood in a large, ill-tended garden dotted with dead fountains and lined with crumbling pathways.

It was night, and the ground floor was dark. In one of the first floor rooms sat Janki Devi. On her lap was a piece of paper that conveyed to her terrible tidings. Two of her ships carrying several tons of indigo, bound for Arabia, had

sunk in a storm at sea.

Janki Devi shifted her gross body on the sofa. With trembling hands she reached for the paper and reread the contents. There was no mistake. Everything was lost, wiped out at one stroke! She had pledged her property, pawned her jewels and misused her royal privilege to buy and stock those ships. They had gone down without a trace. Janki Devi was utterly and irretrievably ruined.

Kunwar Singh entered the room. He was still celebrating his release and had drunk a good deal of wine. He noticed his mother sitting rigid, as if turned into stone. Puzzled, he took the paper from her nerveless fingers and read the message. The blood drained from his face as

the impact of the news dawned upon him. He sank into a chair.

Janki Devi turned slowly towards him. "If Balwant Singh comes to know of this, we are as good as dead," she said. "And he is sure to know—if not tomorrow, then in a week's time, or a fortnight. We must act. It is now or never."

Kunwar Singh gaped at her. The fumes of wine still swirled in his brain.

"I have decided to divulge to Ismail Beg the secret route into the palace," said Janki Devi.

Kunwar Singh's fat body snapped with a jerk. He could not believe his ears.

Half a century ago, the King of Kumbher, Raja Balwant Singh's father, had built an underground passage that ran from the palace and re-



emerged a safe distance from the city. The existence of the passage was known only to the royal family. In the face of capture, dishonour or death, the secret passage would offer the option to escape. However, it had never been used, for the thought of escape was alien to the Rajput of Kumbher.

If Ismail Beg entered the passage from beyond the city, it would lead him straight to the palace, right into the heart of Kumbher. It would be the key to victory.

"It is the only way to redeem the situation," said Janki Devi.

"If we are caught, it will be the rope for us," said Kunwar Singh.

Janki Devi turned upon him like a snake "You were born a fool and coward, and will ever remain one," she hissed. "Do you believe you will ever get anything out of Jai Singh, especially after your betrayal? And now that we have lost every paise, do you want us to spend the rest of our lives in prison?"

"But will the plan succeed?"

"Of course, it will. I have thought it over. Not

more than thirty men are needed to overpower the palace guards and capture the king. At night, with the element of surprise on his side, Ismail Beg cannot fail. He can have half the royal treasure for his pains. And you, my son, shall be King of Kumbher."

Kunwar Singh's face took on a look of low cunning. Here was his chance to turn the tables on his cousin. If his mother said it was a foolproof plan, then it must be so.

"I will make a map giving the location of the secret passage," continued Janki Devi. "You can pass it on to Ismail Beg."

A sudden thought struck Kunwar Singh. "What about that foreigner camped outside?" he asked. "What of Madhoji Sindhia?"

"It will all be over before they even come to know. We have nothing to fear from Senor Noronha. He is a petty adventurer who will not risk attacking Kumbher. He will defend his inaction by one excuse or the other. If worse comes to worst, we will buy him over. Leave that to me."

Kunwar Singh was impressed. His mother had indeed thought of everything. He rose to go. Janki Devi stopped him. "There is only one danger," she said. "I do not know Ismail Beg, but what I have heard of him is far from reassuring. You say he is your friend. How reliable is he?"

"He will give up his life for my sake," replied Kunwar Singh with a touch of pride.

"His life is of no use to me," snapped Janki Devi. "My question is—can the fellow be trusted to take his share and leave?"

"Absolutely. You can leave that to me, mother," said Kunwar Singh. He patted Janki Devi's shoulder and left the room, heady with dreams of fortune and the lingering effects of wine. Janki Devi was alone once again. Although the night was warm, she felt her palms and soles go cold. She knew only too well the consequences of her actions. She looked furtively around her. The murky shadows of the room seemed to close in on her as if to smother her in reward for her ultimate treachery.

(To be continued)

PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

8392
Ritu Thakur (16)
13/486, Lodhi Colony
New Delhi 110 003, India
Painting, pen-friendship
Any country

8393
Uma Rani (14)
d/o Mr. G. Nagendra
Opp Vittal Temple
Sandur 583 119, Bellary Dist.
Karnataka, India
Collecting proverbs, singing
India, Dubai

8394
Khairunnisha (15)
d/o Mr. Ali Monege
Funhilol Village
Mimcoy Island
Lakshadweep 682 559, India
Reading, stamps
Any country

8395
Smitha Mohan (13)
Chandra Nivas
Udaya Nagar
Poonkunnam P.O.
Thrissur 680 002, Kerala, India
Reading, playing
Any country

8396
Kirti Chaudhary (10)
B-54, Friends Colony (West)
New Delhi 110 065, India
Cycling, swimming
U.S.A.

8397
Priyanka (14)
c/o Mr. S.C. Srivastava
P.O. Kalaktang 790 002
Dist. West Kameng
Via Bomdila
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Reading, badminton
Any country

8398
Mannika Singh (14)
Chamba House, Annandale
Shimla 171 003
Himachal Pradesh, India

Making friends, music
Any country

8399
Isha Jain (15)
CP-209, Pitampura
Delhi 110 034, India
Reading, singing
Canada, Mauritius

8400
Ruchi Phadke (12)
37 B, Pitambar Park
Near Anus Oxygen
Old Padra Road
Baroda 21, Gujarat, India
Stamps, swimming
Any country

8401
Kajal Nagarsheth (12)
35, Purshottam Nagar
Opp. SBI, Near Akota Stadium
Akota, Vadodara 15
Gujarat, India
Modelling, stamps
Any country

8402
Janki H. Desai (13)
60, Puntnagar Soc.
Old Padra Road
Vadodara 15
Gujarat, India
Singing, birdwatching
Any country

8403
Tanya Acharya Chowdhury (14)
11/7, N.N. Ghosh Lane
P.O. Regent Park
Calcutta 700 040, India
Music, painting
Any country

8404
Neha U. Desai (13)
20, Haribhakti Extn.
Old Padra Road
Vadodara 390 015
Gujarat, India
Swimming, observing Nature
Any country

8405
Mamta Pandey (12)
c/o K.K. Deo Pandey

Housing Board Colony
M A F. 6, MIG Flats
Pundalik Nagar, Altobetim
Bardez, Goa, India
Reading, singing
Other than India

8406
Alma Fernandes (12)
c/o Mr. Francis Fernandes
Gaunsavaddo, Mapusa
Goa 403 507
Reading, drawing
India

8407
Michelle Castelhno (12)
c/o Mr. A.I. Castelhno
Gunim Sorvem, Bardez
Goa, India
Dancing, reading
U.K., India

8408
Vaishali Kshatriya (13)
d/o Dr. Gautam K. Kshatriya
D-13, NIHPW Campus
Munirka, New Delhi 110 067
India
Computers, music
U.S.A., Canada

8409
Meetu Ahlawat (11)
d/o Mr. U.S. Ahlawat
Kendriya Vidyalaya No 1
Air Force Station
Agra 282 008
Uttar Pradesh, India
Pen-friends, badminton
Canada, U.K.

8410
Kamnia Vadera (15)
H-41, Kalkaji
New Delhi 110 019
India
Music, pen-friends
Any country

8411
P. Meghana Sudha (11)
37-D, Vijay Mandal Enclave
New Delhi 110 016, India
Cycling, reading books
Any country

BOYS

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 8412 | Class IX, P.O. Haa | P.O. Wangdi, Bhutan |
| Shannon Rodrigues (14) | Western Bhutan, Bhutan | Drawing and dancing |
| Polpac Bar | Making friends, reading | Any country |
| Near Figuredo Ground | Any country | 8427 |
| Karriammodi | 8420 | Siddharth Sharma (15) |
| Goa 403.706, India | Rohan Chakraborty (14) | 5/23, W.E.A., Karol Bagh |
| Stamps and coins, sports | c/o Mr. Ranjit Bhowmick | New Delhi 110 005, India |
| Mauritius, U.S.A. | Near Dey's Nursing Clinic | Reading, music |
| 8413 | S. Dhaotia Road, Tinsukia | Any country |
| Noel Rodrigues (15) | Borpatner, Assam 786 125 | 8428 |
| Near STD Tower | India | Vishal Mantri (16) |
| Morailem, Curchorem | Collecting stickers | 2666, Luv House |
| Sanvordem | India, Switzerland | Sainik School, Chittorgarh |
| Goa 403 706, India | 8421 | Rajasthan 312 001, India |
| Music, singing | Vivek Maheshwari (13) | Reading, travelling |
| Any country | c/o Mr. H.N. Maheshwari | Any country |
| 8414 | Digant Building | 8429 |
| G. Dhinesh (16) | Flat No. 7, 3 and 4 Colony | Christopher (11) |
| 70/2, Mandaveli Street | P.O. TAPO, Boisar 401 504 | s/o Mr. Ramesh Christian |
| Mandaveli, Madras 600 028 | Maharashtra, India | Plot No. 8/1, Sector 14 |
| Tamil Nadu, India | Reading, collecting currency | Gandhinagar 382 044 |
| Playing cricket | U.S.A. | Gujarat, India |
| Any country | 8422 | Reading, craft work |
| 8415 | Kshity Gupta (13) | France, U.S.A. |
| Ashish Kumar Bajaj (14) | The Lawrence School | 8430 |
| 53, Kohat Enclave, Pitampura | Sanawar 173 202, Dt. Solan | Siddhartha (14) |
| Delhi 110 034, India | Himachal Pradesh, India | Ramakrishna Mission |
| Stamps and coins | Tennis, stamps and coins | Vidyapith |
| Any country | USA, Australia | Ramakrishna Nagar |
| 8416 | 8423 | P.O. Vidyapith 814 112 |
| Harshdeep (13) | Pratyush Agarwalla (13) | Deoghar, Bihar, India |
| 34, Bannu Enclave, Pitampura | The Lawrence School | Stamps, music |
| New Delhi 110 034, India | Sanawar (N.B.D.) | Any country |
| Drawing, reading | Shimla Hills, Solan 173 202 | 8431 |
| Any country | Himachal Pradesh, India | Tailyang Nime (13) |
| 8417 | Cricket, stamps and coins | c/o Principal |
| Sandeep Das (16) | U.K., Australia | V.K.V. Seijosa |
| 98-A, Shahpur-Jat | 8424 | Dist. Kamang 790 103 |
| DDA Flats | William Jonathan (16) | Arunachal Pradesh, India |
| New Delhi 110 016, India | St. Joseph's School, North Point | Reading |
| Painting, gardening | Darjeeling 734 104 | Japan, U.S.A. |
| U.S.A., Russia | West Bengal, India | 8432 |
| 8418 | Music, billiards | Anish Kumar (12) |
| Tingkam Raja Mansai | Any country | C-205, Nirman Vihar |
| Boham (15) | 8425 | Delhi 110 092, India |
| c/o Mr. N. Boham | Ashish Tuteja (13) | Stamp collection, skating |
| P.O. Kanubari, Dist. Tirap | 4/6, DeeJay Nagar | Any country |
| Arunachal Pradesh 786 592 | Boisar, Dist. Thane | 8433 |
| India | Maharashtra 401 501, India | Gaurav Prakash (9) |
| Cricket | Playing carrom | Class IV B |
| India, Japan | India, U.S.A. | Birla Public School |
| 8419 | 8426 | Pilani, Rajasthan, India |
| Purna Chhetri Rak-Rak (15) | Ganesh Giri (9) | Chess, football |
| Ugyen Dorji High School | Lobesa Primary School | U.S.A., Australia |



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